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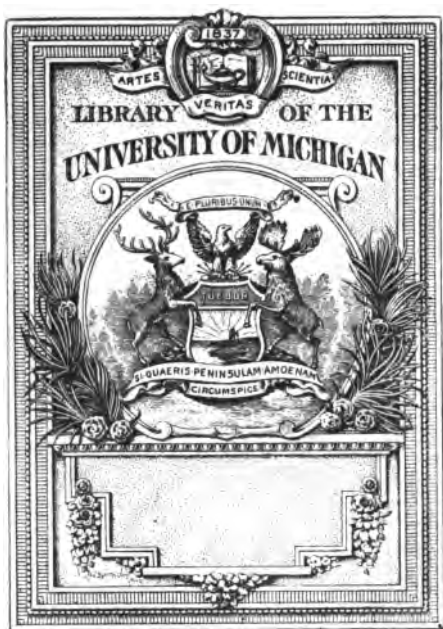
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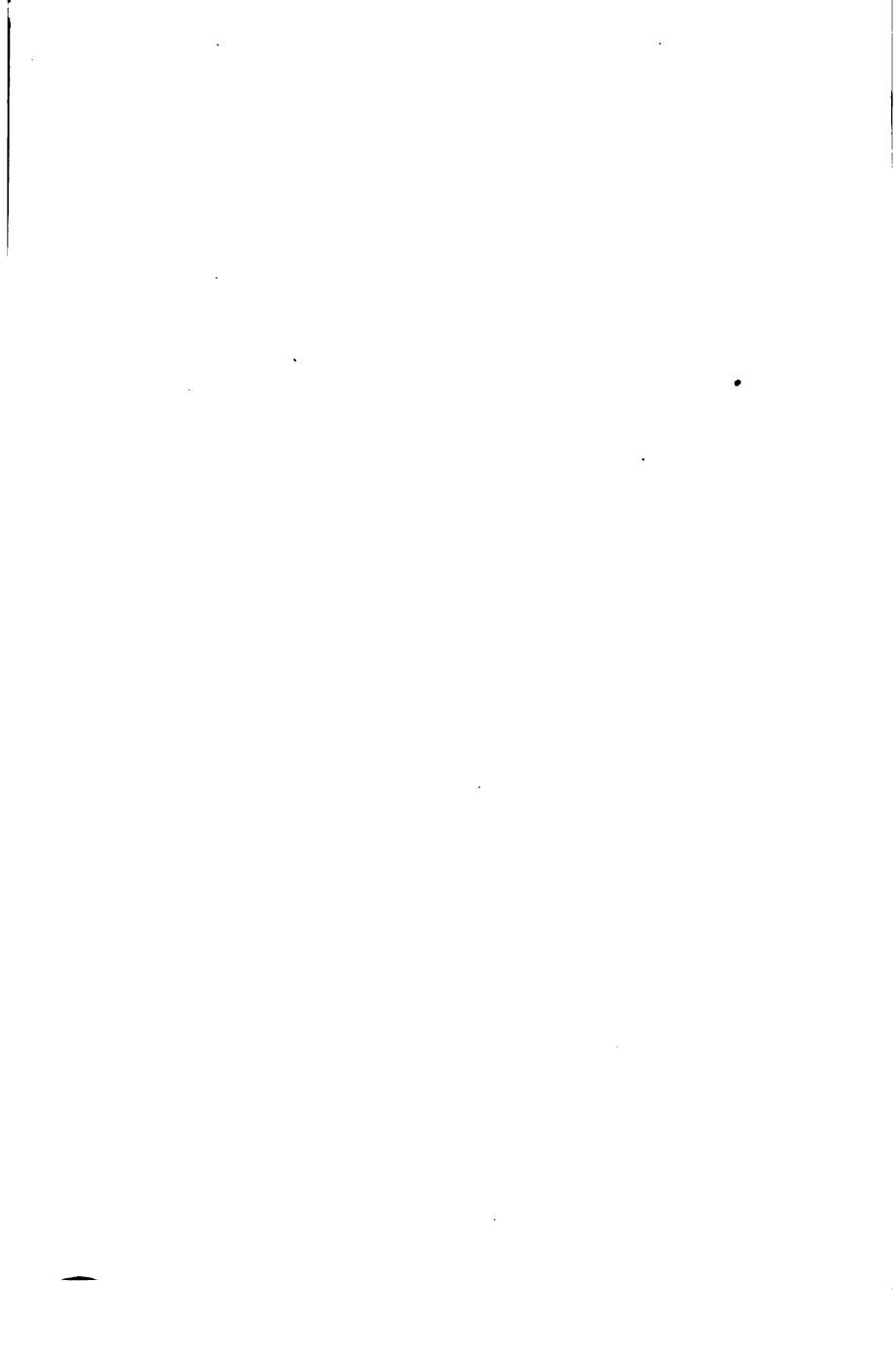
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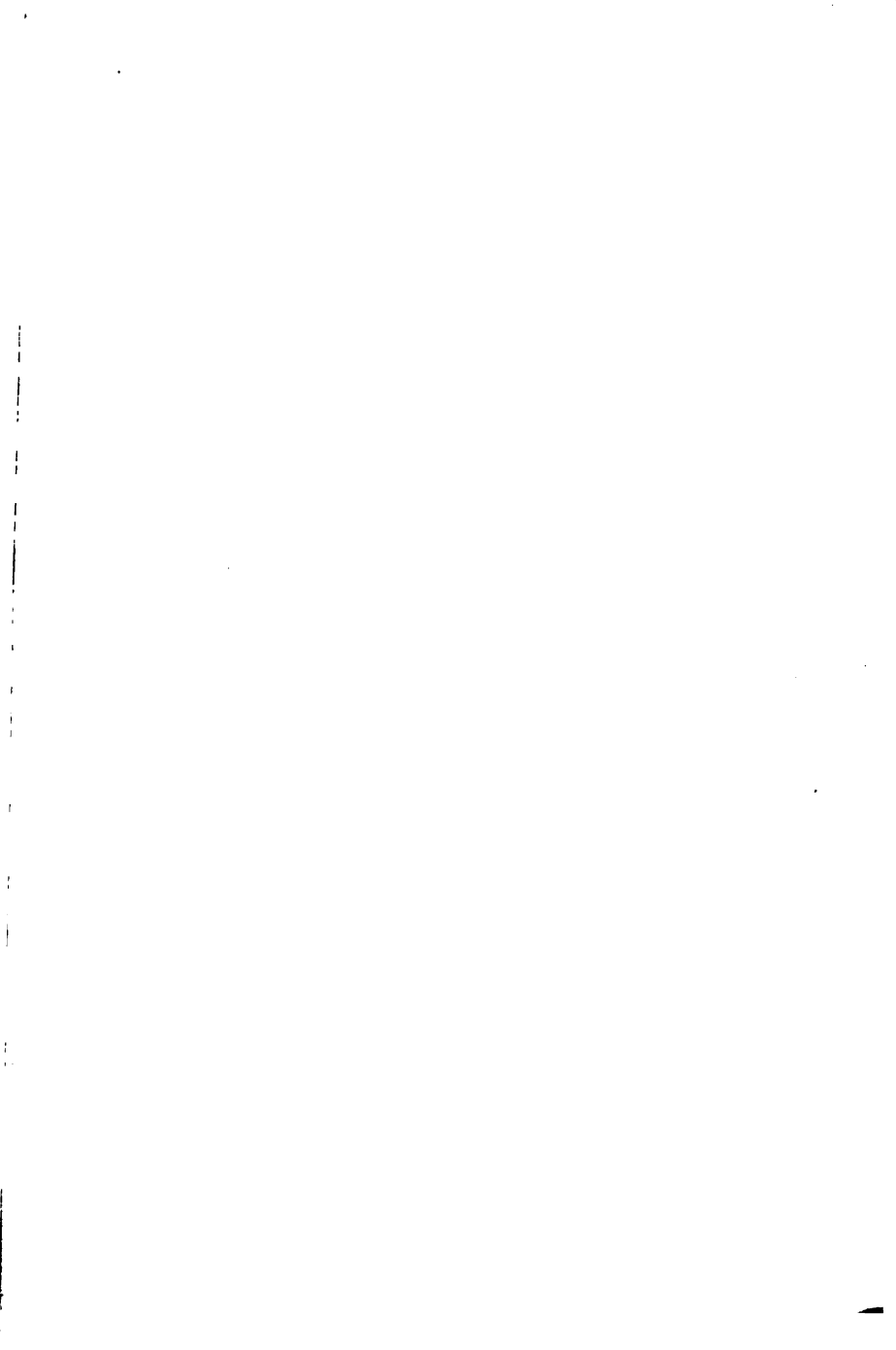
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A Florentine Cycle

And Other Poems

By

Gertrude Huntington McGiffert

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
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1915

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GERTRUDE HUNTINGTON MCGIFFERT

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To
A. C. M.

These slight sketches, Dearest,
Are for you.
You will know their value,
False or true.

No stroke mine to chisel
Titan days;
No voice mine to give life
Splendid praise.

Just a scant, sharp outline
For the street
We to heaven climbed with
Daring feet.

Hint of hues that haply
Love will see,
Forms beloved, a goodly
Company.

What bright colours souls are
In love's light!
Strange their shining shadows
In the night.

Here life's sun-flecked landscape,
There the shade;
But we went together
Unafraid.

Oft my vision holden,
In your gaze
I have seen far Beauty's
Wonderways.

So because I love you
I have kept
Home-clad, glad-eyed memories,
Some that wept.

And I put them, Dearest,
In your hand;
You will know their meaning,
Understand.

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A Florentine Cycle

A Florentine Cycle

"Here you see, as in a glass,
Death and Florence grip and pass."

I

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

EMERGES Florence, with earth-smell of death
Upon her; child of rock with torch of fire,
Sired by Caesar, bred by legend, led
By a divine desire.

'Twixt grappling dragon's claw, bold eagle's
beak,
From hill to hill her most proud story lies
Writ red in blood; for every stone a life
To heaven dumbly cries.

Black anger—man's first passion—shakes itself
From Badia to Sant' Apostoli.
Buondelmonti slain, Mars' winds are sown,
Whirlwinds of destiny.

Leviathan, fierce tower devours tower,
Feud burns out feud, hate-urged the borders
spread;
Small wonder Cavalcanti questioned God
Among the crowding dead.

Rich grows the drenched, fermented, furrowed
soil,
By bursting seeds of fate bewitched and torn.
Horizons smoulder, widen, strange lights flash
Prophetic of the morn.

II

THE CITY OF FLOWERS

BLOOMS the Duomo, lustrous, exquisite,
A precious thing by which to measure art;
Like to a jewel box, without, within,
It holds Firenze's heart.

In an unrivaled era, beauty born
Of force, a floating, daring globe of light,
Fierce Brunelleschi's golden dome swells out
O'er shining marble height.

Brims Giotto's soaring soul, a cleaving dream
By fiery genius traced, transfixed on high,
Light as a wingéd arrow poised to pierce
The target of the sky.

In San Giovanni—Mars' most beauteous,
Most noble temple—swings Ghiberti's door,
Fit gate for Paradise, to welcome babes
To Jesu evermore.

Comes forth the Santa Croce, symbol meet
Of him who taught obedience, chastity,
Implanted like a mighty conscience, peace
 It speaks and charity.

Structure by structure rears—Art come to
 birth—
Santa Maria Novella, as to say
Faith hath a body visible and fair
 Which bides unto this day.

Or San Michele, Santa Trinità,
San Spirito—comely the city grows—
The Orti Gardens, ways to wander in
 Wise Machiavelli knows.

Porta San Giorgio and that most sweet place,
The Boboli o'er Ponte Vecchio—
Dream-names to conjure with—our footsteps
 tempt
 What way the heart would go.

The Via delle Belle Donne leads
To Spanish Chapel, from whose glowing wall
Martini's shining saints lean out to us
 And benedictions fall.

Sweet lilies for Annunziata's saints
Come through our Lady's Gate, and oft go out
Strange whispers of Podesta's torture-vaults,
 Mad civic joust and rout.

III

THE PALAZZO VECCHIO

WAR-PLEDGED, the young Palazzo springs to
arms,

Finger to stars to greet the centuries;
Child of the past, with eager face and brave
It meets its destinies.

Grim ward it keeps o'er trampled traitor hearths.
For conquering Ghibellines its ramparts frown
Upon the quelled Uberti, burgher-banned
Usurpers of the town.

Proudly, amid its circling cypress hills,
Beneath San Miniato's sunset care,
It mocks obsequious ages as they pass
In revelry or prayer.

A Master Fortress! Still old glories cling,
Old pangs, old perils, blasphemies of war—
Were blood to bloom, the Arno's banks had
flowered
With poppies evermore.

Lord of its ilex-blurred Etruscan vales,
Piesole's and Bellosguardo's haze,
Lord of its dewy hedges, distant Alps,
Its flowering garden ways,

Il Bel Palazzo stands, the city's heart
Of hearts; bruised oft when naked hatreds bled,
Austere when hoarsely Vacca called to arms,
And gray with the dust of its dead.

IV

"BY THAT WAY PASS THE GODS"

GRAVE Dante loved it, watched it as 'twas built,
In exile longed for it with yearning eyes;
Its portals are immortal in his heart
E'en now in Paradise.

Oft Petrarch, pausing in its shadow, heard
Ethereal cadences—we hear them yet!
Boccaccio's lute as Fiammetta passed
Do listening worlds forget?

Proud Cimabue's famed Madonna borne
With lighted candles, trumpets, pageantry,
With bells and banners, passed beneath its
walls—
Herald and prophecy;

And Beatrice crowned with roses, bright
With light from inmost heaven softly shed;
And vivid Simonetta, prone, aloof,
And smiling, being dead.

A Florentine Cycle

Make way! Lorenzo the Magnificent!
Black Brothers of the Misericordia pass
To San Lorenz with dirge and crucifix
And solemn requiem mass.

The Vecchio knew its own—O halcyon days
Of idyls, lauds, of madrigals and masques!
When Ariosto spun his elegies,
Pulci his arabesques;

When gay Poliziano wove his pearls,
Ballads of flowers, rispetti light as foam,
His lyric dainties, liquid honies culled
From perfumed days of Rome.

Wide swung the Vecchio's doors—Great Tom
strode through
Seeking patricians, austere saints to be,
Nor Keats-like knew he turned Art's tide and
drew
The world to Carmine.

Gaily the guileless Della Robbias sketched
Upon its steps their childish groups at play.
By Neptune yet Fra Lippi's classic saints
And fair Madonnas stray.

Oft Donatello heard its midnight bells,
Hot genius lashed, commanded aching brain—
Saint George, Saint Mark, the Baptist!
Christianized,
Greek candour bloomed again.

Judith! Holfernes! On the Loggia? Hush!
The people placed them so, as it would gaze
Upon its own incarnate tiger-moods,
 Its own fierce secret ways.

Here came sweet Fra Angelico with eyes
Upon the mid-May heavens, seeking there
Celestial tints for holy reveries
 Vouchsafed to him in prayer;

Visions of lovely faces, tier on tier
Of rapt adoring seraphs, choirs that sing,
The throned Madonna and the pale scourged
 Christ,
 Bright angels, wing on wing.

And Sandro of the painted poesy,
Of gorgeous, mystical imagining,
Who Venus brought to earth, a second birth,
 A later, lovelier Spring;

Who for delight portrayed the sculptural days,
Fixed hue of symbol, form of ecstasy,
From myth and holy legend drew bright strands
 For cherished phantasy;

Painter of glamour, fragile flower-moods,
Painter of dreams, the lure in maidens' eyes,
Lover of spells, and wonderlands of souls,
 Remote in Paradise.

Against the background of Gozzoli's heart—
San Gimignano's rain-cut hills, its trees—
Firenze's pageants climbed angelic heights
By Art's sweet alchemies.

Wise Raphael, the ever young, whose thoughts
Hang on world-walls, learned here himself to be.
So simple greatness, daring to attain,
Wins immortality.

Del Sarto's harassed spirit shouldered free
From mire and muck, caught spark of Heaven's
fire,
Kindled his dead heart's fuel, burned its way
To Art's dust-hid desire.

In fellowship proud Ghirlandajo with
Verrocchio passed, comparing warily
Largess of favor, Medicean smiles,
In careful rivalry.

Magniloquent, Cellini swaggered in
To gloat unshamed upon his shards of pride,
His piquant prodigies, his miracles,
His Perseus glorified.

Savonarola bore the Vecchio brand.
Imprisoned, tortured, fainting in its tower,
He heard his people, loosened hounds of God,
Baying his last swift hour.

A Florentine Cycle 11

And there where vanities flared high to heaven
His funeral pyre was lit by torch of shame.
Yet blazed across the blackened centuries
His name is writ in flame.

And ever after Bartolommeo saw
On thronged piazza fearful fires glare,
The dying Master, scaffold, maddened mob,
And deeds too dark for prayer.

Scant fruits time yields of Leonardo's store,
Yet meeded, he, for large fecundities
By thrifty Rumor gleaned. His least sheaves
feed
The migrate centuries.

Upon Palazzo walls, spacious he loosed
Hate's hordes unhelled, till fiery legions wheeled
Up spilth of slippery blood, and steeds gone mad
Charged furious down the field.

Of myriad vast beginnings, wizard-grasp,
His very toil retarded by desire,
He, molten-minded, fused facts cunningly ,
Insatiate did require

Life's lavish secrets, fixed and diagrammed
The soul's swift movements. Enigmatical
In Mona Lisa's smile sphinx-like he mocks,
Remote, inscrutable.

A Florentine Cycle

Came Michael Angelo, his seething mind
On fire from heaven and hell. To him men stood
As naked, twisted souls, implacate wills,
Inspired hardihood.

To keep men young, exultant on the steps
His David stood, imperious strength and grace.
Perchance as old and sad the Master passed
Age dropped from him a space;

Impetuous boy again, unskilled, aghast,
He plucked his pent-up manhood from the stone,
God-goaded—sibyls, prophets, flashing by—
Futurities unknown.

He of the turgid, overburdened heart,
Who from drear spaces of his being hewed
Death's brooding "Night," incarnate found the
"Dawn"
In some soul-solitude;

His "Judgment" gave to men and called it
God's;
Wraths, retributions, penalties, and strife,
Limned deep upon his own mind's lofty walls
By heavy hand of life.

Stern man of toil, whose eyes far-focused saw
Men great, and painting made them so, who bore
Truth's august message to a wondering world,
Art's high-priest evermore.

Saints, poets, painters, heroes, dreamers passed,
All striving, toiling, hot with mortal breath,
Their footsteps echo down Life's Loggia yet—
 So may men laugh at Death!

Idol of all, the old Palazzo stands,
Bold cypher to a rare illumined text,
A sweet perplexéd lyric heaven-writ,
 From Babel strangely vext.

Monarch in forest vast of towers, it sees
Loved landmarks die as wounded birds, and
 hears
Fall on Firenze as abundant rain
 The passing of the years.

V

HITHER TURN THE HEARTS OF MEN

MOST glorious, most famous child of Rome,
Nurtured by Greece, in adoration cast
Before the cross of Christ, Firenze lives
 Enshrined within her past,

Her last word said, whereto is nought to add,
An eddy circling in God's memory,
A splendid jewel on the breast of Time,
 Accomplished prophecy.

Sketches and Runes

Sketches and Runes

TWILIGHT IN A TUSCAN GARDEN

WHITE roses, roses falling with the dew,
God's words from latticed stars and trellised
sky,
God's vesper words—pale petals of His dream—
See, ankle deep they lie!

The drip of unseen fountains strangely bound
To rhythm of my steps hints shoulders bare
And pipéd ditties, flutes among the reeds,
And laughter everywhere.

Vague shadows track my soul—I see them hide
In deep green pools where drowned the sunset
lies—
Their eyes shine through the pools like moving
stars—
The dark pools full of eyes.

Dream roses falling through hushed sunset lands,
Pale star-cool petals, and on boughs o'erhead
The nightingale—the twilight oracle—
Singing the words God said.

The drowsy dust and pebbles hear God's feet
That beat and beat—a wakeful ivy sways—
Sways to and fro against the ruined arch
Loving such rhythmic ways.

The dusk! The garden close detached and dim,
And full of fitful gradual mysteries,
Strange as a face grown exquisite with love
And fateful prophecies.

A cry of twisted waters girds the gloom,
Still thunders leap the garden leaf by leaf;
Trees, waters, winds cry out—an old world
pain—

Oh Soul, 'tis thine own grief!

The quiet vesper thoughts of God drop down
Through whirling worlds from gardens of the
sky—
My heart is broken with the passionate mood
Of Beauty come too nigh.

THE MARBLE NYMPH

HER laughter!

Moonlight—her pedestal o'turned she flees
To vistaed star-white ilex trees
For fragrant kisses there.

Her laughter!

List, list, she sports with cupids free at last
From weary garlands, duty past,
Gay frolic everywhere.

Her laughter!

Swift gods and satyrs, wind-plucked robes blown
wide,
Spears dropped, shields, torches cast aside,
And she so elfin fleet!

And after?

A lyric wreath to link the scattered years.
Forgot—then clear amid my tears,
Laughter and flying feet.

LUCA AND ANDREA DELLA ROBBIA

SHABBY, faithful, and plain,
 Seeking no gain,
Childlike, with eager delight
They modeled their angels white,

On heavenly blue, green wreathed
 In blossoms sheathed,
Glistening, spotless alway,
As fashioned but yesterday.

Bambino, Madonna, and Saint,
 Glimmering faint
O'er portal, cloister, and aisle,
Soft visions that know no guile.

To the great cathedral's nave
 Glad Luca gave
His frieze of marble song
Dreamed o'er and cherished long;

Choicest and best of his art,
 The boys of his heart.
And as Andrea loved, so he wrought—
Each cherub a sweet winged thought.

Luca and Andrea Della Robbia 21

How they must have studied the grace
 Of a baby face;
And tenderly watched on the street
The toddling and tripping feet!

How beggared the world would seem
 Without their dream
Of flowering walls! Do they know
We love their angels so?

SAN MARCO'S BELLS

AMID dim frescoed cloisters rich
With faded saints and footworn tombs
The soul-stress of those vanished monks
Still looms.

Life upward, inward turned was full
Of spirit-stirrings, and they wrought
On altars, walls, and manuscripts
Their thought.

Here raptured Fra Angelico
In heaven's azure, flame, and gold,
Portrayed his radiant visitants
Of old.

Here Benedetto's burnished chaunts
And gorgeous missals grew apace,
And gentle industries filled all
The place.

Bartolommeo anguished here
And as he painted kneeled in prayer—
Each prayer a vision, for his Lord
Was there.

San Marco's Bells

23

Savonarola pacing slow
The prophets pondered e'er he hurled
His mad anathemas against
 The world.

I wonder do they ofttimes steal
Unheeded to their lonely cells
In old San Marco when they hear
 Its bells.

A BIT OF STONE

'Twas long ago—their very race is gone,
Their place and part in those dim days unknown,
Their daily life, so sweet, so hard, so high,
Traced only in this sculptured bit of stone.
He the austere, deep-thoughted, kindly man,
And she responsive, gracious, rich with life—
Here hand in hand they wait the centuries,
Faithful, serene, courageous—husband, wife.

Perchance in gardens decked with ancient gods
And rich with trophies of a conquered state
He walked, and arduously wrought those laws
We reverence yet, whose greatness made
Rome great.

Else why this fine worn brow deep-lined with
thought,

This strong, stern air of habit to command,
Force the decisive moment, bend men's minds,
Quicken and calm mad pulses with his hand?

And she, his wife, was she a helpmate true,
And proud to bear his sons and daughters?
Yea,

Her face is sweetly wise with motherhood,
As those who o'er dear children watch and pray.

And did her dreams of those old future days
Come true? Were her sons brave, her daughters chaste?

And doth that heritage of nobleness
Come down the years with neither loss nor waste?

Had she perception, gifts of sympathy
And kindly humour? Did she spare and shield
His genius from the rude, time-taking world?
And had she tact to soothe, and grace to yield?
His loving hand seeks hers so naturally,
I know he cherished her and found her fair
With deep, unfailing love, and leading her
Needed her mothering and gentle care.

The quiet days together, kind and calm,
Apart from pomp and pageantry of state,
Have left upon their brows a tender peace
Nor worldliness can mar, nor thrust of fate.
Dynasties perish, kingdoms wax and wane,
Despairing empires pass, old realms are rent,
Wars vex the weary earth, new worlds are won—
These wait the ages, hand in hand, content.

VENICE

THY palette lay with the luminous past,
Live embers of days blood-dyed,
Rich age-ground pigments of glory and fate
And crystals of power and pride.

Thy canvas choose as one chooses a heart.
Or the prayer that one says at night,
Then, spirit bared to beauty, paint
As a trembling lover might,

In sensitive, fugitive, subtle tones,
As it dwells in thy inmost dream,
San Marco, heart of the East and West,
With minarets agleam;

San Giorgio of the Seaweed Isle—
Its belfry like a flower—
A delicate sculptured bas-relief
Against a flaming hour;

The circling doves in the soft blue sky,
And floating on the sea
Proud columned marble palaces—
Porphyry poesy.

With brain on fire, paint, but ne'er
Was colour for boatman's cry,
As the gondolas through tortuous ways,
 With sweep of oar wink by;

Nor yet for the dolorous wild-bird's moan,
The low voice of the sea,
Nor the ache of mastering loveliness
 That melts the heart of thee.

Paint till the vesper bells chime out,
Till the great gold disk drops low,
And the red and yellow sails hang limp
 In the purple after-glow;

Till twilight steals o'er the gray lagoon,
Black market boats glide home,
And the crypts of shadow deepen fast
 Beneath the fading dome.

Paint on till the darkness, then linger tranced
As the valiant moon rides high,
And the waterways shimmer like silver snakes,
 And myriad lights trail by.

And lo! 'tis painted on thy soul
For thine eternal dower—
A gorgeous, opaline, tropic dream,
 Framed in a Perfect Hour.

SPRING ON THE COAST OF ITALY

A PRIMROSE, a heart-throb,
The passionate sea,
Phantom tread of dead armies,
Press of things yet to be;

Lilting preludes, rash branches,
Ruined temples of old,
Flowering walls trailing coastwise,
Far snow-peaks of gold;

Plowed furrows of promise,
Green hilltops of sheep,
Flocks of birds on the sky-line,
Flocks of boats on the deep;

Bridal Spring! and I, waiting—
Oh, the passionate sea!
A primrose, a portent—
Come, come, Love, to me!

IN AN ITALIAN GARDEN

A SHINING hour, a shining sea,
White villas glistening daintily
Hung high 'mid silver olive trees.

The foolish fauns on the gay parterre,
The conscious palms, and here and there
Rose-woven crumbling balconies.

The shabby fountains, the vistaed ways,
The sunken dial of other days
And the phantom pomp of chivalry.

A scented hour, a scented breeze,
The sunset mantle on the seas
And everywhere a thought of Thee.

A NEAPOLITAN CHANSON

THEY sang beneath the terraced palms,
Beside the sparkling sea,
'Till I knew nor which the buds that blew,
Nor which the melody

Key-notes of colour, staves of bloom,
Rhythms of shaken boughs,
Of ruined grottoes, moss-grown founts,
And youth's eternal vows.

Sunshine and song and muted strings,
I knew nor which, nor why.
It seemed the garden was a dream,
The song its soul, and I—
An idle butterfly.

THE BELVEDERE TORSO

WHAT hand hath made? What hero this?

Who knows?

What matter? 'Tis the Greek Soul in repose.

The hand that wrought it by Aegean shore

Wrought for all ages, wrought for evermore.

The face, the very posture vague surmise.

Perchance he pondered 'neath Olympic skies

After Herculean labors, or told o'er

To eager ears his last immortal war

Yet breathless sung. Perchance in solitude

By moon-swept colonnade he lent his mood

To awful charm of ruined temples old

When Greece was young, or while Homeric
rolled

He dreamed on gods that were, on gods to be.

Alas! we know not honours, name, degree.

For ages dear to men, now doubly dear

Since Michael Angelo, when old and drear,

Loved it above all else; grown blind and weak

Was carried to it; laid his wasted cheek

Against the mighty muscles reverently;

And hour by hour beside it silently

With fond slow fingers traced the sinews out,

Relived again youth's agonizing doubt,

That hour supreme when suddenly he saw
Greek art's hid secret and with humble awe
First entered Hellas with anointed heart.
So to the end he measured all his art,
Himself, his age, his cherished Italy,
By its stern soul of beauty, Verity.

AN OLD SILVER BOWL

FINE-WROUGHT as when from deft Cellini's
hands it came
Rose-wreathed, charmed lions guard the sacred
altar-flame.

Mad grape-crowned satyrs tossing boughs and
garlands dance
To Orpheus' magic flute, and nymphs with
luring glance

Their plunging dolphins guide past templed
shores where rove
Slim furtive dryads in their fettered woodland
grove.

As first this ancient bowl breathed beauty,
still it glows;
But now are secrets hid within its brim. Who
knows

What sighs have tarnished it, its rim what
kisses worn?
What pleasures it hath brewed, what fatal
poisons borne

34 Sketches and Runes

To shrinking lips? How stirs its sparkling wine!
 'Tis filled
With human fates. Its fauns at darkling deeds
 have thrilled.

Ah so, fair Bowl, abide! Thou now dost live.
 Love, tears,
Laughter, and death have wrought their craft
 through gathering years.

AN EGYPTIAN LOVE CHARM

CARVEN with curious symbol and mystic sign,
Enwrapped in tissue of gold, as in a shrine,
It lay in a sandalwood casket wrought with
 pearl

And rare chased ivories. What slim, dark girl,
What cherished love of king or caliph wore
This delicate trinket? Did Egyptian lore
Avail to keep faith true in hearts of old?
And would their passionate love shame ours
 more cold?

Enchanted yet it breathes rose attar vows
And lotus lure of love. Beneath palm boughs,
By marble fountains, templed, sphinx-lined
 ways,

Were kisses treason or the pledge of days
Heavy with fate? Was love too maddened
 sweet

For one so frail? Was love too fevered fleet?
And did she wear this token to her grave,
Counting all nought to be his queen or slave?
And had she those fond fancies that defy
The grave, soul of his soul, content to die
Thinking sweet love immortal? Long since
 then

The centuries have borne great tides of men;

Undying Greece has flamed and flared away;
Reverberant Rome has passed; yet to this day
This fragile bit of perishable gold,
With vows and kisses, prayers and tears en-
scrolled,
Fair as of old, wanders in distant lands,
Homeless, aweary for those first soft hands.

LOST IN THE DESERT

The burning sands!

The burning sands!

Lean huddled camels dragging feebly by,
Hell's scarlet tongues licking the brazen sky,
Your haggard face—there are no words to say!
The fiery trackless waste—no prayers to pray!
A trail of dead behind us one by one,
No hope before, only the blinding sun
 And burning sands,
 And burning sands.

She. I dream of gurgling pools in mountain
 caves,
Of swans and oars and widening foam
 astern,
Of leaping cataracts and shoreless waves.

He. And water at our lips! Oh God, I see
Dark channels seething deathward cease-
 lessly.

She. Full troughs and brooks with horses
 wading through,
Swift rainfalls cupped in crevice of the hills,
Frail spangled spider-webs decked bright
 with dew.

38 Sketches and Runes

He. A lake! and plunging deep I find you
 there,
 Your gleaming face to mine—at last
 I dare.

She. Of grateful Judas on his far ice-floe,
 Of torrents gushing from the smitten
 rock,
 Christ walking on the waves of long
 ago.

He. Look, look! the flaming talons make
(*dying*). retreat,
 Pale lotus weave a bridal winding sheet.

She Of those who blessed go down in ships at
(*dying*). sea,
 Of drowsy exiles cradled in the snow,
 The flooding River of Eternity.

AUF EIN ALTES BILD
(After the German of Mörike)

'NEATH glimmering green of summer days,
Where waters cool the sunny air,
How happy and free the little Christ plays
Under his Mother's gentle care!
While ever beyond in the forest maze
The tree for his cross grows straight and fair.

A PORTRAIT

HOMER-HEAD uplifted
In the light.
Eyes, such eyes as Homer's
Had he sight.

Broad, abrupt—for background
Let there be
Beauty, terror, splendour,
Verity.

As a prophet, sternly
Let him stand
'Gainst the faithless peoples
Of the land.

Give him psalmist's gesture
To decry
Vanities and follies,
Those who lie.

Catch his far-fixed vision,
As he saw
God move on the waters,
Write His law;

Felt how young the world is
Even now—
Miracle and wonder
On his brow!

Leave the sketch unfinished—
Who can trace
Goodness like a garment,
Wit for grace?

What's a painting? Worthless.
Far too fast
Souls change. Thus! 'Tis over.
Portraits last

Fix a passing moment,
Fleeting phase?
Yet hearts cherish it in
After days.

GARGOYLES

LIKE the little sins great souls ignore,
The little sins we love them for,
They cluster slyly with grimace and grin,
Mocking the reverent peace within.

In unbridled mischief, a naughty brood,
Defying the great cathedral's mood,
'Twixt flying buttresses they stare
At the holy ones who go for prayer.
With horn and hoof, with leer and sneer—
Impudent creatures—they peep and peer.

Grotesque, uncouth, down far below
The sky-wrought spire they never know
How petty their part in the soaring whole,
And plume themselves with complacent soul,
And nod and wink in conscious pride,
As strangers spy them side by side.

Not demons accurst, nor a sin-bred crew,
But the vagrant fancies some old priest knew;
Gay imps that chased his prayers from the
 throne—
Now doomed forever to dwell in stone.

STRASSBURG.

ALSATIAN SKETCH

A MARVEL of roofs in the thickets—
Roofs steep, moss-stained and old,
Guarded by files of poplars—
Sentinels clad in gold.

Beyond the terraced vineyards
Profiled in black outline,
A windmill like a gallows
Above the cradled Rhine.

For background a gorgeous sunset,
Hill-tops in ecstasy,
And a riot of flaming maples
Just glorying to be.

And in the burnished foreground,
A white road rutted deep,
And lazy oxen followed
By a peasant and his sheep.

A RAMBLE IN NORMANDIE

BELTS of woodland, wigwam haystacks,
Spire and walls and towers gray,
Fields of flax and sweet-briar hedges,
Gardens by the way.

Peasants 'mid the wheat and poppies,
Hooded wagons winding by,
Nibbling sheep and faithful sheep dogs,
Calvaries lifted high.

Through the farm doors, caps and kirtles,
Pewter plates in bright array,
Norman pendules, shining brasses,
Fit for king's display.

Hazy forests, far horizons,
Green-patched hillsides, blue-massed skies,
And the sweetest touch the babies—
Spring-time in their eyes.

THE RETURN OF THE FLEET TO BRETAGNE

FROM cove and harbour,
Sea-wall and street,
From vine-clad house-boats—
A shipwrecked fleet—

The fisher-folk gather,
Grouped far and wide,
With crucifix gleaming
Above the tide.

With strong set faces,
With fixed tranced gaze,
They wait the homing,
From far seaways.

The salt on the seawinds,
The salt on their lips,
Their heart in the offing
As the first sail dips.

A thousand vessels
Ride in with dawn,
A thousand vessels
Six drear months gone.

The sails half sagging—
The fleet is late;
The watching women
Sing as they wait.

Wait proud new mothers,
Wait empty arms,
Old mothers scanning
With chill alarms.

Sweetheart and husband,
Brother and son—
Clement and Armand?
They do not come!

A quailing question,
And none to meet!
An eager bridegroom
And none to greet!

The crowd makes merry,
To feast or wed.
A few steal silent
To weep their dead.

A FISHER-FOLK LEGEND OF PICARDIE

BEACH fires and lanterns—
 'Tis Fishers' Dance—
A treacherous whisper,
 A fatal glance.

Valette goes thinking
 Upon the hill:
"C'est ça, False Traitor,
 A thought can kill."

Sharp hate strikes swiftly—
 A fall! A cry!
Too late repentant
 She sees him die.

A madness upon her
 She seeks his boat—
"Together ever
 The dead shall float."

Their sail is blazoned
 With crouching dreams,
Black wings pursue them,
 Red anger gleams.

They drift the ocean—
Saints save thy sight!
High pallid torches
Light up the night.

If lovers name them
They break their vow.
'Tis woe to sailors
Who cross their prow.

If once they see them
Accurst they go;
If twice, they never
Sweet sleep shall know;

And thrice—Christ keep them!
'Tis death and hell,
Blade, fire, or treason—
A thought strikes well!

SKETCHES FROM A CANAL BOAT

PAST hyacinth banks and crowded quay
The slow canal winds out to sea,
And tulip-laden boats lag down
'Twixt vine-hid hamlet and red-roofed town,
While Jansje 'broiders her wedding gown.

Carved timbered gables, drooped sails agleam,
Crisp windmills mirrored athwart the stream—
Each mill a gallows, so waters dream.
And a flock of the children Rubens knew—
Lace cap and shoenen and kirtle blue—
Go clattering, chattering, knitting at play,
With a pfennig to spend this glad fête day.

Beneath their cart the gaunt dogs pass
With market greens and flagons of brass,
Red apples and cheeses and little wares
To tempt young Jansje from her cares.

On the grassy dyke gay coverlets dry,
Patched hoarded heirlooms fluttering high,
Old blues and magentas greyed by years,
A lifetime of fading and labour and tears.
Wee Gretchen atiptoe counts with care
Big Jansje's linen bleaching there.

Gnarled, bent old women with wrinkled face
In every doorway sit making lace,
In every doorway and sunny space—
And the lace for Jansje grows apace.
Nor tongue they stay, nor hand, nor eye,
Save death himself chance to pass by.

In the old church tower, crumbling and grey,
The great bell clamors the hours away.
It rings in years, it rings out souls—
Hark! 'tis a baby—three it tolls.
And Jansje shudders and kneels to pray,
And hears the three knells sob all day.

The windmills wheel as the winds sweep by
Beseeching and teasing—great birds should fly!
As winds sweep by from horizons of flowers
And countless ages crowd into the hours.

Great red-cheeked Jan with the milking pails
Strides down the wharf 'twixt masts and sails.
Shy, lace-capped Jansje knits at the gate.
"Hist, Jan, would ye kiss when the kine are late?
See the leaded panes glint copper-red
At the sign of the Klompen and Tiger-head."
"Thy lips are sweet"—so the milking sped.
"I love till death, so another," he said.
"Hist, Jan, would ye kiss when the kine are
late?"
"Nay, Jansje, Liebste, the kine can wait."

SUITE BELGIQUE

I

THE WORLD LIES BEFORE

OH the world lies before, let us flee hand in hand
O'er the far sunny leagues of the hard yellow
 sand;
Let us skim like great birds 'twixt the sea and
 the land!

There the ocean curves out like the cheek of
 a child,
Spreading sails flit and flirt like white sea-
 gulls gone wild,
And the world sways and swings because some-
 body smiled.

Glad hours wheel by like a soft pinioned dove,
Joy glows in my heart like the bright sun above,
And my soul melts within me to think of my love.

See a cloud lowers down like a hand from on
 high,
And I reach up to clasp it through rifts in the
 sky—
Oh the sunshine, the roar, and the spume flying
 by!

II

AT THE THREE ANCHORS

'TwiXT headlands that lift like pronged tusks
in the sea

In a rock-girdled nest broods the old hostelry,
Her steep shores no bar to her famed courtesy.

By the shrine in the gate hangs the cracked
anchor-bell

In the garden of sunflowers bordered with
shell,

Where the poll-parrot screeches "Merci, go
to hell!"

The escutcheon—green field, bar of blue, ram-
pant deer—

Is wrought o'er the chimney grown ample with
cheer,

Where with babe on her arm, Madame serves
smile or beer.

And 'tis at The Three Anchors you'll sup like a
knight,

And the wine is as choice as the soufflé is
light,

And they wave you farewell till the road dips
from sight.

III

AT THE SIGN OF THE GOLDEN KEY

THE drowsy huts kneel like white nuns in a row,
The slow bell laughs out as the brine breezes
 blow,
And the sheep through the fields with the blind
 shepherd go.

Busy harvesters bend in the ripe yellow corn,
Swinging scythes sing the note of the far boat-
 swain's horn,
And the little goats frisk in the flush of the morn.

The anchored boats leap like wild ponies at play,
And the brown nets are flecked by the froth of
 the spray
As the fishermen file up the sands and away.

And 'tis over the dunes to the Inn by the sea,
Over mountainous dunes to the good Golden Key,
And you'd best choose the way past the tall
 poplar tree.

And 'tis back by the cliff when the waves cease
 to run,
Past the pool cleft with gold by the sword of
 the sun,
To the house-boat and hearth when the sunset
 is done.

IV

AT THE PORTAL OF HEAVEN

PAST the militant abbey now ravaged and gray,
In whose war-ruined niches the damaged saints
pray

At their sculptured devotions in stoical way,

You will find the Inn-door in an alley of flowers,
Where a cool Jove-faced fountain purls over
the hours,

And the shining canal hurries down to the
towers.

Through a vista of cedars gleam vineyards
below,
Far battlements lean o'er a ruined chateau,
And the pilgrims creep by in the pale after-
glow.

A thousand halt cripples, a thousand who
pray—

God curses them not as they creep on their
way

To the portal of heaven—and who shall gain-
say?

Pain's passionate litany runs down the line,
The flickering candles on crucifix shine
As they wind down the years ever seeking a
sign.

THE VALLEY OF ROCKS

HEADLANDS and hills and a world of rocks—
How cares bleach out in the golden weather!
The friendly goat, the breezes and I
 Clambering up the crags together.

Inland below the "Witches' Cave,"
The "Devil's Cheese Ring" across the valley,
Where the white road coils like a silver snake,
 And lazy shadows flit and dally.

Sheer seaward the tide-hounds harry and race,
Salt echoes tingle the mountain passes,
And self like a husk blows forgotten away,
 The soul roams naked among the grasses.

And the only sin is to hold aloof—
Hearts should unfold in the shining weather—
And the only prayer is that God may know
 How we feel His heart beat in the heather.

LYNTON, DEVON.

A MAINE TRAIL

COME follow, heart upon your sleeve,
The trail, ateaasing by,
Past tasseled corn and fresh-mown hay,
Trim barns and farm-house shy,
Past hollyhocks and white well-sweep,
Through pastures bare and wild,
Oh come let's fare to the heart-o-the-wood
With the faith of a little child.

Strike in by the gnarled way through the swamp
Where late the laurel shone,
An intimate close where you meet yourself
And come unto your own,
By bouldered brook to the hidden spring
Where breath of ferns blows sweet
And swift birds break the silence as
Their shadows cross your feet.

Stout-hearted thrust through gold green copse
To garner the woodland glee,
To weave a garment of warm delight,
Of sunspun ecstasy;
'Twill shield you all winter from frosty eyes,
'Twill shield your heart from cold;
Such greens!—how the Lord Himself loves green!
Such sun!—how He loves the gold!

Then on till flaming fireweed
Is quenched in forest deep;
Tread soft! The sumptuous paven moss
Is spread for Dryads' sleep;
And list ten thousand thousand spruce
Lift up their voice to God—
We can a little understand,
Born of the self-same sod.

Oh come, the welcoming trees lead on,
Their guests are we today;
Shy violets smile, proud branches bow,
Gay mushrooms mark the way;
The silence is a courtesy,
The well-bred calm of kings;
Come haste! the hour sets its face
Unto great Happenings.

THE RUNE OF THE PRAIRIE

HARK! The wandering Prairie Spirit chants
His plaint, his heart-break of monotony.

And we—

Who find the prairie grass so high
Between our toil-mown swaths that lie

So far, so near—

We hear his footfall and his dull lament; we hear
His weary strophe echoing from the skies,
Where all paths merge in one that lies

Beyond surmise.

We hear his melancholy fugue of fate,
His dreary dirge of loneliness, his tears;
And we toil on, and with great patience wait
Upon the years.

THE RUNE OF THE FOG

GIGANTIC phantom crags and ghostly trees,
Dark battlements of strange uncertainties,
Fantastic forms of fancies gone astray,
Dim stalking shadows, pallid wraiths of day,
And I alone groping for thy dear face
Through mists of silence drifting the wastes of
space.

THE RUNE OF THE FOREST

It calls—it calls to me
By shadowy brake and fern,
Where the wan wild roses yearn,
Where the silver birches brood
In gentle solitude.
By sweet cool bouldered ways,
Where the lurking spirit sways
The tangled boughs, and low
Strange rustling love-dreams blow,
It calls—it calls to me.

It beckons—beckons me
Up vistaed steeps foretold
By tree-tops etched in gold,
Where deep-eyed violets sigh—
Faint fragrant undercry.
Past luring forbidden paths
Of desolate pleasures and wraths,
Down shelterless breathless ways,
Wind-swept and heart-break days,
It beckons—beckons me.

It urges—urges me
Past thickets mystic deep,
Where lost hours stir and sleep,

The Rune of the Forest 61

Past haunted caves where dream
Portending days, where gleam
Pale, sunken stars of fate
That summon me and wait.
On—on resistlessly
Unto Eternity
 It urges—urges me.

THE RUNE OF THE SEA

THE fateful line of level light
Girdling the gilded sea;
The gnawing waves on the wastes of sand,
And the pitiless hunger for Thee.

The black hulks looming like ghostly dreams;
The wide, wide sundering sea;
And beyond—Eternity's desolate edge
That shadows Thee and me.

THE BROOK

A RUSH of twisted waters through the glen,
Eager and valorous it delves and hews;
A Future City waits to flower its banks,
So must it wisely choose!

It leaps, it dances on its dainty way;
That spot is for cathedral arch, and there
Some day will rise great deathless marble heights,
So must it have a care!

HARVEST SONG

NOR wings, nor words have we,
Yet cheerily each tree
 From first bird-call
 To last leaf-fall
 Toils joyfully.

Nor boast, nor effort know,
Yet bursting buds bestow
 Sweetness untold;
 Red fruits and gold
 Wave to and fro.

Nor psalm, nor prayer we raise,
Yet yearly give Him praise
 With harvests bright
 For His delight,
 Ancient of Days.

A SONG OF TREES

A SONG of trees^{*} is in the air—
Hush, Sunset, hush! The Forest sings—
It is mine own most ancient prayer.

I feel the chained roots strive to run;
The patient arms reach out and up
To touch the stars, to clasp the sun.

Some trees are gnarled, like you and me;
And some are dwarfed; some regal rise
For splendid throne and panoply.

That lithe young fir in honour stands;
Anointed, choice, elect it grows
For love's doorsill in stranger-lands.

Thy bier this ancient moss-hung tree;
An altar that for rites unwrit;
And here Christ's cross, the Christ to be.

Strange human rhythms bend the boughs—
Low cradle measures, organ peals,
And sway of masts, and hum of ploughs.

Beneath the early thoughts of God
We lay together for a space
Ere He for man had plucked the sod.

Mingled together, dreaming so,
We rocked with thunders, fought the winds,
We laughed at rain, we loved the snow.

We kept the watches of the morn
With sacrament of dew and star,
Long, long ago ere sin was born.

Like butterflies bright months sailed by,
Winged flame and frost. Pale petals loosed,
The silvern nights dropped from the sky.

The strident lion loved our shade,
The lordly eagle sought our branch,
And who were we to be afraid?

Right eagerly "aye, aye" was said
When year by year God called the roll,
Each tree by name—the quick, the dead.

Old speech, old customs wake within,
Wild moods and teeming primal dreams,
I am come back to mine own kin.

With head as on my mother's knees,
My soul lost in the passioned song,
I am at home among the trees.

The Garden of the Gods and
Other Poems

The Garden of the Gods and Other Poems

THE GARDEN OF THE GODS

THE walls thereof were high, its corners bright
With flowering almond, sweet Sicilian flag.
Phoenician cypress lined long arch-strewn ways;
Rills gushed o'er broken columns; fleecy flocks
Strayed through cyclopean portals nibbling buds
From crumbling altars sprung. Hares scurried
by
To drink where once white Daphne's shadow
bent.
Sharp honey dripped from myrtle-hidden
shrines,
And swallows nested in the marble tombs.

Yet saw I not these common things of day
For all about me rain-worn idols stared.
Vine-covered mosques and temples filled the
sky;
Tall towers soared, four-sided, human-faced,
High as the nameless hopes of faiths forgot.
Afar dim pyramids shone pale and blurred;
Slim stelae marked a hazy Sacred Way
By dolmen blocked and jealous Druid stones.

70 The Garden of the Gods

Grotesque, rock-carven gods from tropic isles
Grinned shrewdly over giant rubber-trees.
Stretched prone, a sleeping Buddha bridged a
stream.

In noble ruin lay an obelisk
By crocus fringed and purple violets.
An avenue of sphinxes led to caves
Where sat gigantic deities as though
They judged dead hosts yet prostrate in the
gloom.

Again in outer sunshine I beheld,
Cut on sheer cliffs by some prodigious race,
Colossal monkeys, huge, tempestuous gods
On dragons borne, or holy elephants.
Thrust through wild-apple boughs a viking's
prow
Of alien splendours spoke—intrepid faiths
Whereon tread gentler feet of lesser gods.
Strange forms I knew not, gods from frozen
lands,
In stalwart glory shone across the grass.

Bewildered which bright way to wander, chance
My footsteps guided. Spellbound I beheld
The gods of Greece as on Olympus met—
Apollo! Hermes! Aphrodite! Zeus!
Wild grapes twined Bacchus. Blue-eyed Pallas
gleamed
Deep in a space of hyacinths apart.

The Garden of the Gods 71

In flecks of sunlight glimmered Artemis,
A field of gold narcissus at her feet.
Above, a peerless marble sisterhood
Clustered about Athene's sacred walls.
Against empurpling crown of hills they shone
Translucent, mellow, in the amber air.
Below, most splendid temples filled the plain,
Dim groves of pillars sloping to the sea.
A space I scarcely breathed, scarce could I
think—
The holiness of beauty filled the earth!
I could but kneel before them glad of heart
That man somewhere, sometime, had dreamed
such dreams.

Impelled lest garden vanish I pressed on,
An awe upon me lessened not by scroll
Nailed high upon a birch whereon was traced
"Unto the Unknown God." Below were
heaped
Coins, golden goblets, earthen jars and lamps.
Lead votive offerings hung upon the boughs,
Sweet-scented meadow-grass worn bare be-
neath.

Beyond were rugged hill-hewn sepulchres.
No graven image here, nought save great
names—
Isaiah, Jeremiah—and I knew
'Twas holy ground. The ark of covenant

72 The Garden of the Gods

Stood in the midst, and blazoned over it
"Jehovah, Lord of Lords and God of Gods,"
While on the air rose smoke of sacrifice.

Enclosed by aspens shone a slender spire,
Among the shaken boughs it seemed to sway.
My heart beat quickly as I found stone steps
And came upon a Gothic chapel-door.
Gaunt walls in ruin, buttresses like ribs
Revealed the gnawing emptiness within,
But in the choir still hung a scourged Christ,
And safe below the blessed relics lay—
Knee-cap of Stephen, hair of Saint Therese.
Rough walls were dimly lit by faded saints,
And shining o'er the portal glowed the Child.
Day darkened as I left, but through the dusk
Came paradisa! chords ineffable,
The organ echoes of a requiem mass.

Lost in a maze of olives I sat down
To ponder on man's passion after God.
Came a dim glory, footsteps in the gloom.
Beside a bare rough cross they ceased to be.
Then from the radiance these vibrant words:
"From the beginning have they worshipped me.
In stone, in wood, they seek me. Race by race
Cries unto me and prostrate sees me not.
For me blood girdles red the thirsty earth.
Oft I am some embodied fear, again
I seem or sun, or beast. Harsh power am I

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And beauty; oftentimes high ecstatic peace
Of deadened souls. Man loves me, pitiful
In his devotion gives his quivering flesh
Unto the sword, the flame, tortured for me.
And I for him dwell in these graven rocks,
This paltry rubbish and these tawdry things.
When will they know me, see me face to face?

Moses, Elijah, listened when I spoke.
Young David knew me in the starlit night.
To Zoroaster was I very near;
Light of the World, he found me in the sun
With far prophetic eyes, and worshipped me.
Confucius through his din of thoughts heard
mine.

Upon the desert Allah is my name.
Chance shepherds on the hills of Bethlehem
Went all their days awonder at my song.
Paul saw me darkly, blurred as through a
glass.

One called me Father, loved me as a son—
The veil between us thinner day by day—
Then did men crucify him! crucify!

This Garden of men's gods I love, and these,
Men's toys of faith, of groping hope, I love.
None scorn I lest one worshipper be lost,
And he with outward eye denied my face
Who later with the inward had beheld.
These, even these gross idols, point the way;

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Behold rocks speak and stones give forth my
praise,

Yet am I lonely in my holiness.

I would it were as comrades men would come
And shoulder unto shoulder walk with me
Who am, Who was, Who evermore shall be."

ALL SOULS' NIGHT

As it was promised them so I beheld.

'Twixt sun and sun wild beasts became as
men.

No longer swinging their great heads, they
looked

Amazed upon each other, saw the moon,
The still, dumb trees. The air scarce bore the
noise

Of their rejoicings, their thick stutterings,
The Babel of their unpent, laboured thoughts.

Life-channels, old obliterate origins

By man forgot, they subtly understood.

Birds knew the wise mechanics of their flight,

The beaver of its bridge, the bee its hive.

Bears pondered on the habits of their kind.

The lion kneeled before the spectacle

Of its age-thwarted life by speech set free.

The ape wrought curious tools for stranger
arts;

Knew not if to invent, or speak, or think

Gave greater joy; threw off incumbrances

Life loaded on him when the stars were young,

And stood there in his glory, Lord of all,

The peer of man in mind, beyond him far

In gifts surrendered by mankind or lost.

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Then even as I looked the dawn stole in,
Eyes faded and great heads began to swing.
Most pitiful of all and last to change
The ape reluctant dropped its tools and fled
Beyond the gates of consciousness, again
A gibbering, furtive beast, by nature damned.

HALF ASLEEP

To let one's fancy range;
 To play the bed is so,
The window so, as it used to be
 In that home of long ago;

To play the door is here;
 The street is crisscross there;
And then to wait, as I used to wait,
 For the step upon the stair.

To count as the footsteps pass,
 Now near, now faint and far—
How personal they sound at night,
 What company they are!

Some brisk and some sedate,
 I wonder where they go;
And I drowse a little, till suddenly
 The dear, dear step I know.

The start of joy, the flush,
 The tender, happy thrill,
And then, oh, God! I am homeless and old,
 And his grave is on the hill!

A PARADOX

QUIET I sit by the hearth as the slow years go.

Helpless I sit and dream—my hungry heart
Afar in strange adventures. Who can know

How I scale the frowning crags of destiny,
And talk with God and angels on the mount,
And there renounce love's right of sovereignty?

How I dare go down into the deeps of dread,
And wrestle in the garden of loneliness,
And vanquish hosts of evil and raise the dead

From adamantine graves? How, robbed and
faint,

I lie forsaken beside life's thoroughfare
As the crowd pass careless—friend and priest
and saint—

And only a tattered Samaritan dream comes
near—

His largess of love my pence at the Inn of Hope?
Who can know of my strangled joy and fear,

Compelling visions, passioning, gain and loss?

How wild winds from the infinite beat on me,
While outlined ahead in the gathering gloom
looms the cross,

And I grope on alone a challenge to fate?

.

Patient and petted beside the hearth I dream
With quiet eyes, and watch the years—and wait.

OLD SELVES

Out of the past, my old selves from their lair,
Soul-burned, time-earned, the halt, the maimed,
the fair,
Those old strange selves, they pass me by and
stare,

They pass and stare.

They pass, they pass! I know them all so
well!

Why she is joyous only I can tell,
And why she weeps, why she wears asphodel,
I know so well.

One murdered walks in bloody winding sheet,
One sings low cradle songs unto her sweet,
And one has marks like His in hands and feet,
In hands and feet.

They throng—I hear the clank of chains and
bars—

See here upon my wrists the cruel scars!
Her wistful eyes shine out like wondering
stars,

Wan wistful stars.

What colours circle her—bright souls she knew,
Crowned saints and heroes, scarlet, flame and
blue!

From out life's glowing tapestry they grew,
You, dear, and you!

One toils, one strives, one staggers in the heat,
One has great weariness and bleeding feet,
And one knew kisses—ah, but they were sweet!
Love, they were sweet!

And she with groping hands toward coming
day,
The dreaming child who dreamed too much
to say—
The fluttering bubbles broke, I turn away,
I turn away.

That eager, tender self—the world was cold;
That timid shrinking self—but Love made
bold;
And she, the sunset one, with sheaves of gold,
Scant sheaves of gold.

Time may not blight, nor Death smite one
least rose;
Red-petaled yet in land of last year's snows,
Perpetual in suns forgot, it blows,
And He, He knows.

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Glad-eyed, hope-crowned, singing upon their
 way,
God-pledges, shadows in a brave array,
With trumps and palms they pass—and some
 who pray,
 And some who pray.

They pass, they pass, with hands held out to
 me—
My old selves robed in immortality—
In earth, in heaven, in hell, mine utterly,
 Mine utterly.

AN EPITAPH

(TO F. F.)

HAD Botticelli painted thee with his divinest
hue,
Thy spirit like a sword had pierced the shining
pigment through.

HAD Luca known thee he had loved to fashion
thee a frame,
And thy bright beauty wreathed in it had
brought him greater fame.

HAD Watteau posed thee he had seen thy
buoyancy and grace,
And humbly bowing, begged thee choose thy
own free poise and place.

HAD Rembrandt—nay! no shadows dark were
ever near thee seen—
Van Dyck were liker to have known fit back-
ground for a queen.

La Rochefoucauld an epigram had for thy
picture writ,
His clear mosaic words inspired by thy more
nimble wit.

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A chaplet Fénelon had wove of thy sweet
piety—

The sick bless yet thy tenderness, the poor
thy charity.

THE BELATED CHRIST

LONG the great God patient waited,
Waited for the Christ belated,
For the Christ that was to be.

Oft the heavens, sadly bending,
Mourned the unseen dove ascending,
Mourned the Christ not yet to be.

Mighty prophets failed, unknowing
God His sonship was bestowing;
Blind—the Christ they might not be.

Some on mountain tops chose glory,
E'en Hell mocked their piteous story—
Their lost right the Christ to be.

Some the Christ-life lived, till, failing
At the cross, went shuddering, wailing,
That the Christ they dared not be.

Some found death too sweet a guerdon,
Shrank the final, fearful burden,
Would not rise the Christ to be

And the good God patient waited,
Waited for the Christ belated,
For the Christ that was to be.

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Till came One who, lowly bending,
Saw the heavenly dove descending,
And left all the Christ to be.

Tempted not by this world's gaining,
Tempted not by right of reigning,
Left it all the Christ to be.

Lost Himself for love of others,
Gave Himself to save His brothers,
Winning power God's Christ to be.

Bore for them the crucifixion,
Dared for them the resurrection,
Evermore their Christ to be.

SPLENDID FAILURES

MEN to bay and laurel bow,
As is meet.
But the whole world loving kneels
At the feet

Of the splendid failure hung
On the Tree.
It seems yet I hear Him say,
Who will be

To the God within him true?
Who will die
For his vision? Crucified
As was I?

FAREWELL

FAREWELL, oh little son of mine!
Thou tak'st the heart of me.
My life is as a fallen leaf
To blow to thee.

The time together twinkled by—
So flitting brief the space
We hand in hand walked ere thou went'st
Beyond my pace!

I can no longer see thy path,
No longer choose thy way;
But love leaps out across the years
And I can pray.

Who'll guard thee, save thee an thou fall?
Who'll comfort thee in pain?
Oh God! that I may never see
Thee home again!

Farewell! Farewell! Life trumpets thee!
These bursting tears but show
I would not, dare not bid thee stay—
Adieu, Dear! Go!

IN HOSPITAL

EVER before no hand save mine
Fended or toiled for thee;
Now 'twixt us these divided walls
Break heart of me.

No touch save mine hath soothed thy brow
Or eased thy dole of pain;
Now must I weep without the door
And call in vain.

I know thou sayest o'er my name,
Aweary for my face;
I can but hold my arms toward thee
Across the space.

IDENTITY

So slight the jeweled girdle of the soul!
Thoughts strain and dreams wear thin
Its substance. Jar of passion, shock of sin,
The delicate brush of a joy's swift wing—
And lo! 'tis snapt! The scattered jewels ring
Against the pavements of the stars or cling
In tendrils of the dawn, and the soul sweeps
Far out into unfathomable deeps.
Yet haply some stray part
Nests in a comrade's heart.
So slight the jeweled girdle of the soul!

NOCTURNE

DEAR Heart, could it be so
That I should love and thou not know,
Let be, nor pity me, my life is sweet because of
thee!

And Dear, should it be so
That thou dost love and I not know,
What matters it to thee or me? Love has
eternity!

A DREAM

It was so sweet to see her,
So buoyant, loving, true,
With all the dear old tricks of speech,
And the calm, brave smile I knew.

We had so much to say,
So much we each would know,
But oh, poor heart, I had forgot,
She died long years ago.

THE GOOD ANGEL OF THE HOUSEHOLD

(TO K. R. B.)

BEAUTIFUL face and heart,
Nature's most noble art,
Time's masterpiece of Love!
Fainting we look at thee,
Lifted, inspired, we see
Visions of Hope above.
Impress of strong, sweet life,
Wrought by thy soul's brave strife—
Holy the path thus trod!
Down through the ages roll
Waves from thy mother-soul,
Bearing great hearts to God.

HER VOICE

HER voice is mystical and low,
It beats my thoughts away.
Her words are sacrificial flames,
I see them when I pray.

I feel great splendid scarlet wings
Brushing against my face;
I walk upon the molten sea
And lack not any grace.

Her voice is soft—an April breeze
That gently blows through me.
My waste heart is a garden now,
A cheerful place to be.

In glittering ranks with lance and shaft
Her shining words sweep by;
Brave bannered ships they come and go,
Swift flocks against the sky.

Her voice has shadows hid within—
Some be who faint and fast—
Dark hint of vows and martyrdoms,
Worn pilgrims chanting past.

It has a sound of dainty mirth
Upon aeolian strings,
Of tourneys, knights, and stepping steeds,
Of doughty happenings.

Her voice is comfortable and kind
Like my dear mother's eyes,
Her cool white hand upon my brow,
Her gentle lullabies.

Her voice is low and mystical,
Pale starlight on the snow,
Swift running water in the dark,
Lost faces lovers know.

EN PASSANT

Two faces loom! Two faces loom!
One deathless instant in the gloom.
Spirit to spirit soul-sheer they gaze
Down breathless, hazardous, difficult ways.

What visions! Life unto life laid bare—
Thy life and mine—how did we dare?
Always, ever, on through the gloom
Two faces loom! Two faces loom!

THE GREAT LEISURE

LIFE like a debtor
With soul in fee,
Branded and shackled
In slavery;
Harried and hurried,
Buffet of care,
Hither and thither,
Scarce time for prayer!

Then the great leisure!
Nonchalant now,
Aeons to squander
With granite brow.
Princely the pastime
Counting the springs,
So are the daisies
Great happenings.

IMMORTALITY

Dost live? Then thou immortal art.
But what of those who conquer not?
Who drift with neither helm nor chart—

Superior nor to self nor sense
Nor circumstance? Who even here
Know naught of life? Do they go hence?

Are they immortal either now
Or after death? Nay, God is good,
And in His wisdom doth allow

To towering oak, to tiniest flower,
A place within His circling care,
To bloom, to fade—a day, an hour

But conquering souls who with Him bear
His life, His cross, His sepulchre—
Who from their scarred and dead self dare

To roll the mighty rock and rise—
These are with Him immortal, yea,
These here or there with conquering eyes

Have passed the grave—they have no part
With death—they live! And dost thou live?
Then thou, thou too, immortal art.

POST TENEBRAS LUX

AFFRIGHTED down Death's realms I fled
By star-spurned whirling ways that led
Past yawning gates—the gates of Hell—
Past splendid shriveled worlds that fell
In that swift judgment night of gloom
When headlong rushing doom met doom.
With love and hate in endless chase,
Despairing, helpless in the race,
With whitened lips that might not pray,
I reached out hands that might not stay
O'er seething gulfs and plunging spheres
For vanishing wraiths of mortal years,
For phantom blooms on rocks of fate
That slipped my fingers—too late, too late!
On o'er the winds I rode, I fled
Past solitudes of arid dread,
Furrowed with vengeance, black with fears,
And sown with human blood and tears;
On past the fathomless, starless shade
Where shivering fugitives hid and prayed;
Past limitless void and cycles of pain—
I caught a moment—then on again
Through drifts of flame from caverns of sin—
Red were the beckoning hands within;

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On dizzily, madly on and on,
And no place in Chaos to rest upon!
I heard the wails of the Lost apart—
Their burning tears dripped through my heart.
I heard wild laughter startle the deep,
Heard mocking malice its revels keep.
I heard faint earth-bells echoing blow,
Heavily freighted with mortal woe.
On, ever on, in awe and wonder,
Amid the scattering, rocking thunder;
Amid the lightnings sharp and red,
As it were vacancies that bled;
On past the whirlwinds of Destiny,
Into the calm of Eternity.
Escaped far spent from Death's abyss,
I wearily crept to the threshold of Bliss.

At bay at last I lifted my eyes,
And lo! the Throne in Paradise!
Alone together, face to face,
My soul and God in that holy place!
Long time we gazed—I knew at last
I was satisfied. Heart-thirst was past,
And gnawing hunger and groping sight.
Then the spark that had lighted me through
 life's night
Flashed back, nor feared God's challenging
 eyes.
"Art come unsullied through earth and skies,
O little soul?" "I make no plea—

I only know it is Home with Thee."

"Hast thou no fear 'midst the undefiled?"

"Thou art my Father—I am Thy child."

Long time we gazed—and then—God smiled.

AZRAEL

DREAD episode sublime,
Catastrophe of Time,
Great Devastator Death!
Thy sudden fatal breath
Strikes chill against my day.
Lead on—I own thy sway.
Unveil thy sphinx-wrapped brow,
Finger from lips take thou,
Hold fast my hand—I go
Adventuring to know.
No more in masquerade,
Of my own soul afraid,
Fearless I ask of thee,
Show me Eternity.

GHOSTS

Oh what do I see in thy face, dear child?
Grave eyes look out at me.
It is an ancient unknown soul,
 A stranger to me and thee.

Oh why dost thou weep without cause, dear
 child?
I sorrow for pain forgot.
And why art thou angered? In some old life
 Hate's venom hath left a spot.

And why dost thou start in the dark, dear child?
I one time murdered men.
And why dost thou shudder at sound of chains?
 I was a captive then.

Art pure, flower-pure as a babe, dear child,
Yet beasts glare in thine eyes.
I lived with them once when the angel closed
 The gates of Paradise.

Whence that exalted, holy look
That makes me kneel to thee?
'Tis the after-glow of some good life
 That oft-times shines on me.

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And why is thy gaze so far away?
I hunger for other lands.
And why dost thou smile as the angels smile?
 I touch their unseen hands.

How goest thou fearless to danger, dear child?
In my blood is victory;
I knew no fear for a hundred lives;
 Could I now craven be?

Will the ceaseless change ne'er end, dear child?
This is eternity;
As the rain and the cloud, my spirit keeps
 Its immortality.

OVERHEARD

THE DOG

I COME, I make my place, I stay,
Appealing not demanding;
I speak no word, yet silent say

A thousand things; speak faith and love,
Devotion, understanding.
As anciently, I know how move

Your moods, for once we two were kin,
Before that day of wonder,
When you began to laugh, to sin,

Became a master—God to me—
And speech clove us asunder.
We gloried in your victory,

Just missing it, we dogs who strove
With you through ages, craving
The mastery. Still jungle, grove

Live in your blood. We understand
Each other, as when braving
The wild we ran a preying band.

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'Tis good for you to be with me,
Throw off your mask, returning
To that old simple comradery

With me, a dog beneath your feet,
Man's artifice unlearning,
Man's sophistry, pretense, deceit.

To laugh, to weep, to speak, to know—
I half but ne'er quite venture—
Beyond these customs kinships go.

See here's my paw, I will obey,
Accept your praise or censure—
Sin yet may make me man some day!

THE CHILD

YOU are so big and tall,
You're twice as big as I;
But it won't do at all
To have you master—why?
Why, doggie, I don't know;
It happened long ago;
And I—I can't remember—
Only since last December.

RETRIBUTION

Idle I dreamed and dreamed and dreamed of old;
And now when I would use my mind's best
rooms,

Alas, I find but grave clothes, cobwebs, mould,

And the dank chill of death. I hasten through
Those long-closed twilit chambers of my soul,
Some strewn with rubbish, some fast sealed—a
few

Still hold the frozen forms of life—my dead.
Alone with these—the wages of mine ease—
In helpless impotence I bow my head.

Yet Jairus' child? She slept so brief a space.
And Lazarus? He sister had. But I?
I scan the dust-dimmed pane—Oh for His face!

Does not the Master know the dead lie here?
Will no one bid Him come? The slow hours pass
With cold unfriendly eyes. The feet of fear

Come down the echoing corridor; winds moan;
A far door shuts. Oh God, how still they lie—
Those mute and rigid forms—and I alone!

Forth from their dumb reproach I flee in dread,
Back to familiar doorsteps and to dreams.
Oh to forget them, to forget the dead!

SONG OF THE PIONEER

NAY, not the safe and rutted road
Where the halt and blind may plod,
The Four Winds are His breath, He saith,
I take to the open with God.

So many the lanes that lead somewhere!
So many the gates ajar!
I flee from them all to the woodland-deeps,
Led by the morning star.

I roam in the secret, odorous way
Where ne'er went foot before,
Lured by the fluting pipes of Pan,
And the thunder on the shore.

I follow the track of the mountain goat;
I shepherd the hill-top sheep;
Fireweed for wealth, wild-grape for wine,
From rock to rock I leap

Up beetling crags to the snow-capped peaks
Where outer spaces blow,
Where the infinities pile to the throne of God,
And the sea-tides rock below.

Song of the Pioneer 109

O far from fixed and measured bounds
For fenced and padded minds,
I follow Him of the Wanderers,
Strong Harvester of Winds.

Too many the men in the beaten paths!
I blaze a trail untrod
To a lonely grave in a primal world
Where other men may plod.

A WORLD OF DREAMS

Oh is it true I count the blooms
Upon the cherry-bough?
Are these real yellow butterflies,
And is this I, and thou?

Those rainbow waters, purple isles
Are true? Or is the dream
I dreamed last night a truer life,
And do we only seem?

I mused on lofty spacious realms,
Mad moods and projects high—
A world of wraiths? Then what are we—
These things called thou and I?

Are we frail haunted phantom ghosts,
The world a spectered way?
And do we live most in our dreams,
Or in the dreaming day?

"LET ME INTO THE DARKNESS AGAIN"

It has come at last—

Our meeting!

This my dream through all the past—

The lonely unshared years,

The yearning tears,

And now—our greeting!

How I have pictured it—my hour supreme—

Poor pitiful dream!

And now—I would forget

Our meeting—

This cold, strange farce—this greeting.

I would have back the dream,

The lonely unshared years,

The yearning tears.

Oh, God! I would forget

That we have met.

THE STORM

WAILS and Wings and Woes whirl past
The frightened shore; ships plunge and sink;
Love's wreckage washes, and I and a drifting
form

At the wave-worn brink.

"Poor little Hope," the Sphinx softly said,
"You may hold her and kiss her, now she is
dead."

The pitiless passion-winds toss her hair;
Fierce frenzies beat on her quiet face;
Soul of my soul—and her lips to my lips chill—
God grant us grace!

What though calm seas sigh penitence?
What though glad skies, new shores, there be?
Say what, oh mocking fate, when Hope is dead,
Are these to me?

"Poor little Hope," the Sphinx softly said,
"You may hold her and kiss her, now she is
dead."

THE MANTLE OF THE YEARS

ATHIRST, anhungered, comfortless, alone,
Despairing, yearning, worn with ceaseless fears—
(Lo, the Gods laughed—I heard their sneers).

And then a surfeit—Life would fain atone;
But habit is the mantle of the years—
(Lo, the Gods weep—I feel their tears).

REAL TROUBLES

YOUR eyes are masked to-day;
 The skies are gray;
Winds cry among the solitary trees;
The dying embers sadden me to tears;
A barrel organ stirs old memories
 Of other years;
The dull belated sunset seems a part
 Of my defeated heart.
My tattered chair, my faded tapestries,
 My broken clock—ah so!
 I know
If you had kissed me all the world were gay
 To-day.

A SUMMONS

WISTARIAS ripple in purple waves,
The plum is gay, the cherries blow,
Gold butterflies doff to the first white rose,—
So blue the skies and your eyes smile so!

Next spring-tide, dear, when you pluck the buds,
My arms will be holden—do not weep!
In the Everlastingness I'll know,
And dream of our tryst in the stillest sleep.

REPROACH

THOSE eyes! How they hurt me! I dread to
gaze

In those younger eyes, their gladness sways

An older pitying self; I weep

That an outcast murdered hour may keep

Its ghosts to haunt the after days.

Those eyes! How they hurt me! I cannot gaze.

TOO LATE

DENIAL past, Life comes to thee
With hands held out to bless;
Alas, thou hast no habitude
To deal with happiness.
Thou hast no measure for the full
Of pleasures poured for thee,
No chambers ready for the guest,
No harps for revelry.

Joy lilts and flits and flutters by
With thrones to give away;
Thou canst not use a diadem,
Thou hast no mind to play.
The years toss flowers at thy feet,
Love leaves a legacy,
Days pipe, but thy lean impotence
Keeps its Eternity.

CHARITY

HATH the heart not alms for its palsied hours,
A tear for its dungeon-bred?

Do not weeping days dig gaping graves
For their galleys of trampled dead?

Wouldst thou force to Scorn's mirror thy crippled Soul,

Deny hope to a thing that lives?
Can not Self forgive a red-stained Self
As God Himself forgives?

WHERE AND WHEN?

WHERE will your grave be,

Where will it be?

Down 'neath the waves of the southern sea?

Up in the north amid frozen snows?

Under the pines and the mountain rose?

In valley or wilderness, desert or park,

Dug in the daylight, or dug in the dark?

Shall sinister hands hide the body you know,

Or will it in pomp and dignity go?

When will the day break,

When will it break?

Will sunny skies shine or the wild thunders
shake?

What last and wonderful word will you say?

Who will be with you? How will you pray?

Will you suddenly drop in the height of your
power,

Or pass pulse by pulse, tardy hour by hour?

Like master or slave will you pay your toll?

May God have mercy upon your soul!

JUDGMENT

WHAT will God say at Judgment Day?
Condemn for sins that scarlet be,
Or crown for all eternity?
Nay, He will turn aside and say
 "Take her away,
She is not beautiful to see;
A thousand lives to live has she
Ere she from ugliness is free.
When she to beauty wins her way,
 Bring her to me."

PASSING SOULS

ACROSS the stars float fleecy clouds,
Past days, waiting in silver shrouds
For their brothers gathering apace.

And the shadow passing the gold moon's light
Is perchance a soul swept home to-night
Where the star-winds leave no trace.

ALONE

Oh Mother, Mother, I'm lonely apart,
I'm frightened so when the night winds blow
And the rain drips through my heart.

Oh Mother, Mother, don't you hear?
Yes, the daisies are sweet that bloom at my
feet,
But oh I want you near.

Dear Mother, Mother, I'll try not fret,
I'll dream it is night and you'll come with the
light,
And perhaps God won't let you forget.

THE RACHMANINOFF PRELUDE

I HEAR the distant, far retreat,
The ponderous tread
Of the ancient dead,
The ominous beat of invisible feet.
I hear the undersong of death—
Through darkling mists it echoeth
In aching, desolate, haunting strains.
I hear the Past stalk by in chains,
I hear God's bugle thoughts resound,
I hear the time-spurred ages tread
Up steep, eternal hills that bound
The unpent skies. And yet again
That awful tread
Of the ancient dead,
Passing beyond man's trembling ken,
And on and on,
And fainter, farther, on and on,
The beat of far retreating feet,
The ponderous tread
Of the ancient dead.

ASE'S DEATH

(PEER GYNT SUITE)

Love grows dumb,
Life turns numb,
 With muffled steps I hear death come.

Chill joys stare,
Old sins flare,
 In scourging blasts my soul stands bare.

Terrors loom
Down the gloom,
 The way drags overlong to doom.

Worlds whirl by,
Twilights fly,
 In the swinging trough of the stars I lie.

Hither blown,
Thither flown,
 A sob forgot in the wide unknown.

On my breast
Deathless rest
 The slain red roses Love loves best.

Memories fade,
Life's afraid,
 And self goes out in glittering shade.

Drawing nigh,
Gleaming high,
 The Cross of Christ athwart the sky!

Let me go,
Dreaming so—
 He bent and smiled, His face I know.

Endless sleep,
Tranquil, deep,
 Where wide oblivions surge and sweep,

Surge and sweep,
Asleep—
 Asleep.

THE BELLS

A **CHEERFUL** song from God goes up,
His joy in the world He has made,
In sea and mountain, in colour and sound,
In earth and seed and blade.

But more than all His infinite realm
From tree to rainbow span,
The Lord exults in the curious arts
And handiwork of man.

Ah, God is covered with blazing light,
Ramparts and domes of flame,
But His greatest glory is not when man
Bows low before His name:

'Tis when in his strength and pride he comes
And the work of his hands he tells,
Then God is glad, but best of all
He loves the beautiful Bells.

God marvels at cunning devices contrived
To discover His secret will,
Till His hid designs are an open book
To guide men's crafty skill.

And He smiles to see as they grasp His plans
How they use them as their own,
But of Bells had the Great God never thought,
The Bells man created alone.

And ever God hears them with fond delight
As each its message tells;
For best of all His children's works
He loves the beautiful Bells.

THE HUNT

CRASH and off and away together
Over the moors and the purple heather,
Over the moors in the golden weather!
Huntsmen, gentlemen, hunters, all
Loosed at last by the harbourer's call!
Off and away! Like a swinging lash
Two score pitiless staghounds crash
Out through the broom with hot fixed eyes,
And surer and clearer and deadlier rise
Over the hills where the fresh track lies.

Hound to hound and horse to horse,
Mile on mile through the yellow gorse,
The scarlet coats, the bits agleam,
The reeking flanks, the froth, the steam,
The reddening spurs and the daring leap
Down treacherous foothold of mountain sheep,
Up perilous steep, from ledge to ledge,
Around the covert and over the hedge,
Through wooded coomb and baffling glen,
Through glen and coomb—pack, hunters, and
men!

Beyond, the lordly wild red Deer,
Gaining the cliff where the rocks fall sheer,

Clears crag and chasm with breathless spring,
 Wheels down the wind like a bird on wing—
 Noble mile on mile with eyes on fire,
 Noble mile on mile through ooze and mire,
 Till his hide is black and his staunch limbs
 tire!

At bay at last in brave defeat
 On a rocky ledge where the waters meet
 He turns on his foes with striking feet.

He rips a hound from flank to flank,
 The stream runs red from bank to bank.
 Hound after hound he grapples and turns,
 With tossing crest he fends and spurns,
 A death-trapped knight he fends and spurns.
 Death-trapped! The white blade at his throat!
 His proud head lowers, the hot hounds gloat,
 His royal antlers are borne away,
 A stately prize—brow, bay, and tray!

.

Had God walked over His hills to-day!

A DIALOGUE

JEREMIAH. (*kneeling proudly*)

NEBUCHADNEZZAR. Arise! Why kneel to one
who envies thee?

JEREMIAH. Who envies me, O King? Me, desolate,

Defeated and in chains, a man of tears,

A voice lost on the wind, a staff forgot?

NEBUCHADNEZZAR. Still, envied of a king.

JEREMIAH. Envied, my Lord?

NEBUCHADNEZZAR. Does velvet ease the gnawing
of the heart?

For this the awful fury of thy faith—

Though I have many gods I know it not.

All passions have I known, all passions tried

Save this strange mastering passion after
God.

Had I a thousand thrones all would I give,

Yea, hungry, thirsty, follow thee in chains

Could I like unto thee, be mad for Him.

ASK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN
UNTO YOU

RENDING the dark, Lucretius' cry,
"No God is there to magnify!"
Slowly annihilation crept
Upon him and he gladly slept.

"Myself am heaven and hell." Content
With cup and book old Omar went.

"Oh Father," Galileo prayed,
"From sun to planet unafraid,
O'erwhelmed by thousandfold surprise,
Let me search out earth's each surmise.
Behind the veil grant me to go
Who have so long desired to know."
The great astronomer afar
Journeyed in glee from star to star.
With heaven's guardian discussed
Strange wonders of the ways of dust.

In glory Plato thundered past,
Rang out, "I have found Him at last."

As each soul craves, so is it given,
Annihilation, knowledge, heaven.

FULFILMENT

PASSION—it was rounded
By love's divinity;
Love—its deeps I sounded—
'Twas life's infinity;
Life—'twas ever hounded
By death's finality;
Death—and lo! 'twas bounded
By God's eternity.

THE GUEST

DREAR we were and dull
Till lo, you came!
Our spirits rose to yours
With wings of flame.
Swift sparkling thoughts danced by,
Wit flashed and flew,
Jove bowed to Jove—a god
Each smiling grew!

TWO LIVES

For you the open seas, the world's highway,
Its vistas wide.
For me an ancient tree to love, a brook
To lie beside.

AT LAST

CARELESS as a butterfly
Winged with levity,
Till death lent his royal crown
To give her dignity.

MY CREED

But this my need—
A Father in Heaven, a worthy work to do,
And a mighty love for a noble heart and true—
But this my creed.

FAME

A **WHOLE** life lived in silence,
Then one swift blossoming word
Flung to a careless passer-by,
And lo! the wide world heard.

A DISCOVERY

I DID not know till he had gone
What mother-love must bear;
But now in every mother-face
I see it written there.

AMBITION

A FLEETING rose-bud crave eternal life,
With its own loveliness unsatisfied?
Is perfume of its passing not enough?
Has one least rose-bud ever really died?

TO-DAY

Cut off by the soul's refusals
From future and past I see
At last the daily miracles,
The wayside Poesy.

The Tree of Time
and
Other Sonnets

The Tree of Time

I

EACH ROOT TO SEPARATE DWELLINGS LED

ITS roots coiled round about eternity;
Its branches covered space. Upon the ground
White flocks and ploughs, heaped corn and
fruits I found,
And gifts of sandals, staves and ivory.
With earthen wine-jars, singing joyously
The potters brought their lamps, and crowned
with leaves
Boys bore the sacred baskets piled with sheaves,
While healing blossoms fell perpetually.

As I my offerings made of blood and bread,
Earth opened and beneath I saw the dead;
Each sinuous root to separate regions led.
Closed gates there were and realms too blinding
bright;
In some I paused not, filled with pious fright;
These on my tablet writ gave grave delight.

II

THE PLACE OF HEROES

I saw the heroes rise and quaff. Above sharp grate of keel and grind of falling trees their armour clanked. With sword to hilt in flame each to his mother sang—these were their words.

LIKE brands ye laid us nightly in red heat,
Unflinching plunged us, purged us pure by
fire,

In secret hardened us—more stern than sire,
Strong foods prepared for us—"So gods must
eat,"

Sharp weapons gave to us and chargers fleet,
By sacred legend spurred, by precept stayed,
But most we drew our courage when ye prayed.
Quaff to your Mothers, Heroes—on your feet!

So reared by godlike rules we grew in power
Till swift descended our immortal hour
By younger mothers for their babes foreseen.
Arm failed not, heart quailed not, compact
and clean

Our unsheathed spirits smote. Our victories!
Quaff to your Mothers, Heroes—on your knees!

III

THE PLAYGROUND OF DEAD CHILDREN

It was always summer in the Playground of Dead Children and I stayed longest there.

SOFT moss grew here for tender stumbling
feet;
Low seats upon smooth rocks they found,
spice-seeds
And aromatic leaves for feasts. Gay beads
They hunted hid in fragrant pods, and sweet,
Tart berries far in witches' wild retreat.
Brisk squirrels dropped them nuts, and water-
reeds
Piped gladly when they danced upon the meads;
Birds brought them tidings, brooks conveyed
their fleet.

'Twas always summer and the days were bright
With brightness lost from homes bereft and
dark.
All seemed abundant glad, save when at night
They wept for arms but dimly missed by day.
Then singing-angels held them till the lark
Bid all God's cherished children wake and
play.

IV

THE ABODE OF YOUNG MAIDENS EARLY DEAD

Crowds of young maidens early dead I saw, like flowers
garnered from the gardens of the world.

PALE, honey-pale, as they had dwelt too long
In under-worlds, dusk's dim tranquillity
Passed into them, they gaze forth broodingly
From pomegranate glades of death. Roots
strong
And thick twine o'er the lintel where still
throng
The latest come, half-veiled in shining white,
Each holding in her hands a twinkling light.
Nor hate nor love they know, nor any wrong.

So sad their song: "We were too young to
weep,
Too young to sin." Bright Beatrice leans
On Dante's missal, vexing strange and deep.
Stern Jephthah's daughter wan narcissus
gleans.
"Dance! Dance!" they cry, "till swift life-
shadows fall."
"Too young to love," they sing, "we have
missed all."

V

THE REALM OF UNHOLY LOVERS

Many familiar faces I saw in the Realm of Unholy Lovers, but it was a sinister place and I came soon away.

DESERTED pedestals and void recess,
Dimmed haloes lost — Love's lovers stood
aghast

With widened eyes—now they discerned at last
What love had cost. Heloise cried, "My
distress

Were gentle price for Abelard's caress!"
Isolde clung to Tristan, "Our sweet past!"
But Launcelot bowed his head, and others cast
Sad eyes aside in shame and wretchedness.

Bright Magdalen leaned o'er the Holy Well,
Pale crocus-gold her hair, her eyes on high
In adoration strangely pure. "I dwell
Beneath God's glance." Light shone upon her
head,
And many kneeled and some hid from His eye.
"Our sins are stepping stones to Him," they
said.

VI

THE HABITATION OF THOSE WHO FAILED

Once had I not been able to distinguish between the despair of sin and the agony of failure. Now are they as the sill of hell and the portal of heaven. Notwithstanding, I left this region exceeding sorrowful, tears yet upon my cheek.

UNSEEN old curses bore them down to earth,
Taints, crime-begot, lay hoarded in their veins,
Crossed bloods blent not, or harsh malignant
 strains

And secret wrongs claimed tribute at their
 birth.

Ills stalked them, perils balked them, joy and
 mirth

Brought sick recoil, chance judgments gendered
 worse.

Called they upon the heavens? Lo, the curse
Stayed not for all their anguish, all their worth.

In regal robes one walked with sunken head.
"Who art thou?" "He Christ bid go sell."
 "And these?"

"False Cataline; there Alcibiades
In wasting dreams relives his old disgrace,
There Cain shrinks back abhorred among the
 dead."

But most I looked on Judas' staring face.

VII

THE SANCTUARY OF YOUNG MOTHERS

Dark it was and sad, I did not stay.

FOREVER unappeased, bereft they pace
Or back or forth save when by grief o'ercome
They sink upon the Stone of Sorrow dumb
And still, fixed inward eyes upon one face,
Dim unheard voices filling all the place.
By idle hands unheeded, cobwebbed lie
Unfinished tasks—so quickly did they die,
From cradle vigil snatched, from fond embrace.

With long thoughts steeped in unreturning years,
Denied the future, "Lo, our part is o'er.
No more," they cry, "may we dry bitter tears
Of those we love, or serve or shield or spare.
Nought can we do but pray unceasing prayer—
Life incomplete, uncrowned forever more."

DIONYSUS

The winter were-wolf 'twixt the Festivals of the Wine-
press and the Flowers.

FORGOT winged words mid foldings of the hills,
The flower-enkindled woodlands, fountains deep
In rocky caves, the fleecy grazing sheep;
Forgot the fragrant vintage, faun-loved rills;
Forgot wild music of the reeds, quick thrills
Of tingling tree-tops many-voiced, swift leap
Of fire in veins; forgot while poisons creep
And slow his emptied soul with madness fills.

Then as a Hunter, wine-enraged, he smites
Lone farms upon far snowy Thracian heights,
Wolf-fanged devours the aged, blood-stained
tears

Fair limbs of boys, no maid or matron spares.
Till winter-frenzy past, grief-stricken, sane,
And beautiful, he brings the Spring again.

KEATS

TORCH of Apollo—wrapt in sudden blaze,
Thy swift soul spent itself—immortal light,
While siren music from Olympus' height
Poured from thy stirring heart its wingèd praise
To beauty, truth, and gods. Thy fever plays
With flashing gleams upon our quickened sight.
As meteor-trail, thy passing in its flight
Scatters great sparks of life. Compelled, we
gaze
With thee into the starry realms of space
Whence come thy songs inspired to haunt the
race.
Thy name was "writ in water"? Nay, thy
name
Is writ across the century in flame.
Cloud-hid, anon it cleaves the dark asunder
And lingers with an after-sense of thunder.

AMIEL'S GARDEN

His Garden! His bright candelabra trees
En fête! His lilacs steeped in joy! His sky
Limpid and blue! The same flecked shadows
lie

Athwart this path he paced. His reveries
Float in the air. His moods, his ecstasies
Still linger charmed. Pale butterflies flit by—
Were one his soul it had not found on high
Banquet more choice than those infinities
He daily knew. And now no one to hear
The hovering hours, the singing grass, to feel
The wrinkles of the soul smooth out, to see
God's shadow bend down from eternity
His garden empty! Yet I gently steal
Lest I disturb his dreams still smiling near.

A NATION'S POVERTY

MEN die unmourned in these swift latter days
With scanty prayer and scarce a spoken word,
Rich fruited lives unheeded, deeds unheard.
An age ashamed of honest grief and praise,
That counts them fulsome, having none, a jest,
That grudges time to weep a hero slain,
Is paltry, cheap, ignoble, pinched and vain.
A hero honoured is a nation blest.

Worse is an age with no great men to crown,
No pasts to cherish and no shrines to build,
That has no heroes fallen, hopes fulfilled,
No deeds to sing, its every altar down.
Corrupt it is, inter it earth to earth;
When death is nothing, life is little worth.

THE POET

A DREAMER he, one fed on cloud and star,
Who dwells above the throng that comes and
goes,

Yet feels the hidden anguish of our woes,
The pain, the hopeless tragedy that mar,
The pathos and the mystery that bar
Our powers. Who scorns Life's shams and
empty shows,

And unconfused, serene, brave-hearted knows
The strength and glory of the days that are.

Who having ears hears silent, ceaseless roll
The deeper undercurrents of the soul;
Who having eyes sees everywhere the sign,
Symbol and promise of a world divine.
The Singer's voice is his—a soul-swept lyre—
The Seer's gaze, the Prophet's heart of fire.

SLEEP

TIME's ancient benediction, gentle sleep;
The miracle and mystery of the years,
Perchance the surge and sweep from other
 spheres,
Wide worlds of sweet forgetting. Surge and
 sweep
Perchance of tidal wave from far-off deep
Of God's remembered life. From some dim
 shore,
Unheard amid the day's insistent roar,
Float vague strange echoes that divinely keep
A mystic sense of Presence in our breast,
A sense of soul-paths through the star-strewn
 haze
Where dimly glide the shadows of the days.
There, Sphinx-like, brooding o'er eternal ways,
The Spirit's Hospice stands, where each may
 rest
Enfolded in the infinite—God's guest.

COMPENSATION

A SOMBRE spell upon my spirit lies.
Far off upon the levels of the past
Dimly I feel a shadow faintly cast
Athwart the golden noon of my emprise.
(I will not gaze, I close my heart, my eyes.)
The shadow comes apace, around me sweeps.
I choke in its chill mist, my spirit weeps,
For death of love doth it not symbolize?

Then through the pain I feel the touch of light
As starlight on white lilies grows more white.
The shadow softly stirs, bright wings unfold,
Transfigured stands God's Angel; I behold
His patient eyes. What though the pain abide?
The shadow holds the Angel at my side.

HOPE

HOPE is the victor's armour, strong to bear
The thrusts of fortune, charmed, immune from
harm.

Hope thine, thou shalt not traffic with alarm
Nor harvest bitterness. Hope rends the snare
Of crafty days. A master, swift to dare,
Leads Life in halter, coerced as a slave.
The great wear its insignia. The brave
Enter its promised country unaware.

Wings to the weary, glory in the gloom,
Hope bids the body turn e'en from the tomb.
Healing is in it, nourishment and sleep.
Oh little children, all else failing, keep
This one God-cable to the unseen shore,
Hope against hope, and hopeless, hope once
more.

FEAR NOT

NOT for to-day, oh little one, I write,
But later when life's glory is gone out
In stress of strife, in agony, in doubt,
When stern endurance falters and the fight
With self seems lost and acrid troubles bite
Into thy very soul, then Dear One, hear!
Above all else thou fearest, most fear Fear.
Take thou my password, whisper it at night.

Fear is a smouldering fire, a venom'd dart.
Fear is a wolf to gnaw the timorous heart.
Upon it treads death's red-fanged hound dis-
ease.

Go forth, serene, undaunted, undismayed,
So shalt thou master all thy destinies.
He only conquers who fights unafraid.

The Homestead

A Legacy of Memories

The Homestead

THE HOME

(TO G. A. B.)

Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers
have set.—Prov. xxii, 28.

SAVE godly children no man leaves the world
A goodlier gift than an established Home,
Wherein the future generations keep
Their growing heritage of love and faith.
For Home is founded on the rock of love.
Its walls are wrought of faith, its tower of pride,
Its door of courtesy. A gentle trust
Looks out of every window, and its chairs
Are comfortable as are no stranger's chairs.
Its chambers hold old lullabies and ring
With ancient frolic, and its roof-tree guards
Places of tears and tender sorrows shared.

Life waxed and waned, the earth a temple was,
And this our Home enshrined the altar fire.
Here tragedies of birth and love and death
Were played, as it would seem the world itself
These shabby curtains daily rose upon.

Here heaven was for those who yearned for it.
Here genius did great things with simple ease,
And talent lesser tasks by industry.
Here kindly age put on fresh garb of youth,
And youth spun its own thread of destiny.
They ate and drank, they bought and sold and
died,
Those sires of mine, but above all they lived.
I am the voice of their young hearts, old thoughts.
And speech has wings, and I must thither go
Where they knew not. Yet I draw sustenance
From springs they knew, and lessons they began
I finish easily. Here daily come
Echoes of them; their unremembered lives
Uplift or hamper. Oftentimes I start
As some illusive shadow of their mind
Recedes and fades among vague memories.
Again sharp contests rend me; racial feuds
That took their rise in other lands and times
In phantom battle tear my helpless will.
Sometimes I do not know myself—it seems
A stranger looks at me from mirrored eyes,
And flitting ghosts and apparitions steal
A transient stronghold in my inmost self.
Anon in direst need, when failure stares,
Within my veins out of that brave old Past
A sudden courage runs, a fearlessness
Born of a thousand conquests, and I rise
And conquer in the name of those dead sires.
And oft distraught by din of sordid ways

There comes a gradual peace and calm, the
poise

Of some forgotten life rooted in prayer.
So I press on hot-hearted with their faith
To bear the high traditions of our house
And humbly to bequeath to future days
Those qualities that time and circumstance
May ripen into some perfected fruit.

THE GATE-POSTS

GATE-POSTS forestall the waiting kith within
In words of welcome, stand with open arms
To bid you enter, graciously confer
New dignities upon you—host or guest—
Each a distinction honourably defined.
Gate-posts have character and subtly give
Some inkling of the inmates of the house
And intimation of events to come.
Brave masks they wear to him who passes by.
Keepers of secrets, they oft feign a pride
Even in fortunes fallen to decay.
They to the outcast lift forbidding hands,
Unto the wanderer speak security.
The envious beggars curse them, and the poor,
Unsummoned, pass them by with wistful eyes.
Strange gate-posts bid the traveler hesitate
In apprehension or expectancy.
Those of a friend a password give of peace—
The honest welcome of unconscious things.
So doth it much behoove a man to pause
Attentive to these symbols of the home
Ere he entrust himself to enter in.

THE DOORSTEP

HEED thou the Doorstep, threshold to the world,
That vague and troublous world which vampire-
like

Has drawn its yearly tribute o'er these steps,
Or tempting as a fevered dream enticed.

The very blossoms of wistaria

About the portal breathe expectancy.

The knocker smiles as it would welcome you
To delicate attentions graciously.

It is a place of handclasps and farewells,

Of kisses and the last slow look of love

That haunts the heart forever and survives

Life, death, and time, yea even love itself;

A place for news to come, kind words to go,

For bounteous courtesy and valiant tears,

For glad and grave surprises, plighted troths,

For eyes to watch unwearied through the years,

Too sad for weeping—hope's despairing watch—

Sadder than death the steps that do not come!

Here mothers part with sons and turn to face

A homeless home, and little children gaze

With wistful wonder on the hills forbid.

A gravity it hath which doth compel

The traveler's feet even from utmost earth—

So different from all other doors our own!

Through weal or woe the wren sings gladlier
here,

The cricket cheerier chirps, the old bell's voice
Rings comfortably across the quiet hills.

The swaying pines, the lilies, and the rose

Hedge round about the doorway like a ring

Wherein we, left, cling closer hand in hand.

Its sill is worn with feet that come and go—

Pilgrims into the world, pilgrims returned—

And they who one by one pass out detached,

Aloof, with a strange smile and folded hands.

The Doorstep doth command Eternity.

THE HEARTH

SEEK first the Hearth, 'tis as a glowing heart
To gather friends, to whom men come for
warmth

In a chill world, find hospitality
And lodging, and fare forth cheered mightily.
The Hearth is boon companion to who will;
Hath quality of life, and as the sun
Revivifies the jaded minds of men.
The wounded spirit finds sweet solace here,
For virtue issues forth from it that heals
Like merry medicine. No one may leave
The hearth-fire as he came. Before it men
Do sit with staring eyes and inward see
Such shadows of themselves distorted play
As makes the sorriest sinner pose a saint,
And saint the veriest culprit out of hell.
The fool loves not the embers, nor the knave,
For fire-light spies upon the knave and frights
The fool. Wrath melts before it, madness flees,
Craving the dark in which dark spirits dwell.
At brightest hearths the fewest words there be.
Here gentle friendships richest fruitage bear,
Wit, blaze for blaze, gives back Promethean
flame,
And generous confidence unbidden speaks.

Deep meditations have sweet savour here,
And wisdom comes to us at firesides.
So is the Hearth the altar of the home,
And men will ever love the element
Which guards the dear traditions of the house
And links each generation with the next.

THE LIBRARY

"I have sought repose everywhere, and have only found it in a little corner, with a little book."

ST. FRANÇOIS DE SALES.

Is anything so good as to return
After a bookless visit to one's books?
To seek one's own accustomed easeful place,
Snow-girt without, the blazing logs within;
The mullioned window gay with daffodils;
Books on the window seat, and close at hand
Low tables full of them; and this new book
That waits enticingly—a choice event—
What if it prove the Book of Books for me?
I chide myself for giving to new books
That of myself should go to make new friends.
For somehow living books do seem more dear
Than many I have called by name of friend.
It is enough oftentimes to lay one's hand
Upon a well-loved book and feel its power
Electric thrill. Oftentimes a casual glance
Between old covers lets great spirits loose
And so surrounds me with familiar forms
I know not if myself am one of them
Or they the jostling wraiths of life itself.
Sequestered days are days wherein we grow;
When fresh ideas grind blunt wits sharp again;

When splendid bursts of bloom surprise the
mind

And take enchanted colours from the soul;
When thoughts detached and vague slowly
emerge,

Become ours to dispose of as we will,
And richly nurtured by immortal books,
Make us akin to lofty master minds.
So, welcome, hermit days as days of gold,
To spend apart in a Great Company.

THE PANTRY

WHAT of the Pantry, when for you and me
The world was bounded by rich 'marmalades?
Brave rows and rows, shelves laden high and low,
Red quince and currant, raspberry and plum,
Spiced peach for company, wild cherry-bounce
For Christmas and Thanksgiving, old receipts
Boasting a century of toothsome use.
Can you not smell the fragrant boiling grapes,
See the great baskets heaped with luscious pears,
The tables piled with cherries you must pit,
Brass cauldrons full of things delectable,
Hot pepper-sauce, an heirloom yearly wrought,
Most memorable of all household events?
And best of all the Mother queening it,
Absorbed, with shining eyes and busy hands,
Directing, measuring, tasting, all intent?
Realities of service and home-cheer
To notch the memory with happiness!

THE BACK STAIRS

I WOULD not like to tell how oft I raced
Up dark Back Stairs, a Something after me;
What giants hid within the deep black oven;
What stealthy goblins by the woodhouse crept;
What troubles life held when pet-turtles crawled
Into the dairy, and night made the churn
A hideous mumbling hag, and creaking boards
Sent crinkles down my spine, and things behind—
Oh very close behind—clutched out until
My hair stood up and I just turned—and ran!

THE ATTIC

I LOVE the Attic, dim, mysterious,
Where, unadorned, the house, unmasked and
grave,
Shows bare and bald. No frivolous paint, no
touch
Ornate and profligate to garnish age.
Its skeleton rafter-ribs, its hollow eaves
And powdered dust it wears with dignity.
Antiquity is wise and dares be bold
In its unvarnished worth. Here no contempt,
No ruthless ignorance of the past has place.
Go softly in, old age claims reverence.
Yet here and there youth shows its passionate
face.
From letters, silken robes, and trifles gay
Cry out a thousand gleeful voices glad
With joy of life: "We are the chrysalis
Of human hearts, they dying, we remain."
That idle distaff and this cradle here
Speak epitaph more plain than rain-worn words
On crumbling gravestone yonder on the hill.

THE SILVER TEA-SET.

THE worth of things lies not within themselves
But in such thoughts as they do move us to.
A trifle made by fond remembrance dear
The costliest substitute cannot replace.
How personal the dower of the dead!
Their relics virtue have and things they loved
A sanctity that fain would move our tears,
And so remembers us of their sweet charm
We cannot credit matter outlives soul.

Thus hath this Silver Service potency,
Availing much to keep tradition green,
Like as a symbol passed from sire to son.
And she who last reigned o'er it, queen of
queens—

I used to think I'd paint her as she sat
Behind the Silver Tea-set pouring tea.
She always looked as she had just stepped down
From a great portrait in the billiard hall.
Her white hair fell in curls each side her brow
Whereon was sweetly written "Motherhood."
Brave eyes she had and gentle courtly mien,
And she was stately as she should command.
I was not quite afraid of her, but kept
My childish eyes upon her steadfastly.

Skilled was she in all noble household arts
(And every day there were sweet rusks for me).
We drank from rare blue cups that somehow
seemed

Insignia of caste and like herself
The fit associate of patriots.
I never see blue porcelain anywhere
But brings beloved figures from the past,
Old feasts, old frolics, voices long since hushed,
Bright bubbling kettle, scent of steaming tea,
And visions of the faces at the board.
Thus did her children's children homage pay,
And with their tea they drank her faith, her
pride—
A glad and daily sacrament of Love.

THE MIRRORS

BEREFT the house without its ancient glass,
Where pass, repass, and do enact themselves,
Albeit mockingly, forgotten scenes
For those with eyes to see and hearts to heed.
My ancient mirrors are of motley sort
And curious legends oft I read therein.

The Old Gold Oval in the morning-room
Is for the fair of face, where softly pass
Frail Greuze-like flower-children, that do leave
Bright joyous smiles of innocence therein.
Gay dancers glide to airs of old Rameau;
Still ditties made by motion audible
Float out to me from silent harpsichord,
With fragrance of sweet roses long since dead.
Oft plainer than peruke or shining sword
I see masked hearts that fain would hide their
hurt.

Faces look out and eyes I seem to know
Flash back like thoughts to mine—some ancient
sire

Who thought my thoughts in some lost century—
And here a lip familiar, there a brow,
Until it seems that I myself am one
Of that dim vanished company who have
No more existence save in mirror here.

The Square Glass in mahogany enshrines
The very Puritan of Puritans.
Such eagle eyes do dwell within its depths
As would command new worlds arise, and give
Even unto hell the soul for conscience sake.
How stiff the starch, how straight the spine, how
still
They sit on Sunday sofas learning Psalms
And writing constitutions with their blood!

The Shabby Mirror with the painted top
(A wavering glass to mortify the flesh)
Gives back the Past as troubled dreams give
back
The troubled days, wherein as moving trees
That darkly sway traditions move so real
I scarce distinguish them from memories.

By curious chance a foolish Rose-wreathed
Glass
Of gilded cupids, garlands, lovers' knots,
Invites most graciously, rococo-wise,
A Watteau shepherdess, a Louis Quinze—
A boudoir toy and intimate of queens
To deck blue tapised wall by fragile Sèvres,
Now staidly hung beside a hair-cloth couch.
Yet do I find even in this cold clime
Some pretty vanities recorded there,
Easy withal to match a mood unto!

The Carven Mirror in the lower hall
Hangs as it used when age was young and gay,
And Love looked last within and turned to die.
How long it grieves—that last long look of
death!

So do the mirrors of my homestead hold
A mimic stage, whereon for me are played
With measure for my pleasure, such old scenes
As do embarrass me with endless guests,
And fill the house with most strange company.

THE PORTRAITS

LIFE-DOCUMENTS are they, enduring seal
Of days forgot, of sweet and bitter things
Which yet no voice speaks forth to vindicate.
Once flesh and spirit, who needs ask thy deeds,
When as transcendent light through glowing
 veil

Thy naked soul shines through obliterate paint?
Thy inmost secrets, guarded cunningly
By life's quick parry, skillful quip and jest,
Stand forth unshrinking, limned indelibly.
I turn, lest too inquisitive I probe
Past gracious mien to find a bruised heart!

Yet must I glance once more at this brave lad
Who wistful looks at life he never lived
With that strange immortality of youth
Shining from fearless eyes. Oh bright dead Boy
Why do I love you so? Shall I some day
Be mother to a little son like you?

THE CLOCKS

THE three grandfather clocks, one on each floor,
Dispute the endless hours continually.
One shrill as any shrew complains at night,
By daylight rants and raves discordantly.
One pompous, as 'twould strut about and boast,
Chimes clarion challenge boldly through the
house.

The third clock at my door is my close friend
And ever shares my life. Ofttimes it strikes
A noble note of triumph for the morn,
A splendid note of joy to rouse the soul.
It can be vehement, exalted, brave;
Uplifts my heart in psalms of thankfulness;
Is often anxious, as in sympathy;
Has frequent wistful questions, warnings, hints,
And strangely knows my troubled bitterness;
Oft in denunciation strikes, severe;
Direct it speaks the truth to me and calls
My outraged stubborn passion by its name;
Then pleading as a friend, and sorrowful
Or tender, patient as a mother might,
It gently soothes my blind and dumb distress—
“Rest—child, rest—child,” until I fall asleep.

At night how loud they tick, how faithfully!
What company they are! Tried family friends

Who watch the generations come and go,
And so well know to strike the Hour of Birth,
And knowing wait and wait to strike for Death—
That strangely certain fate that somewhere bides
Inexorable, inevitable, and sure;
To which as to a fixed and final goal
Man goes, or young, or gay, or sad, or old;
Nor shrinking saves, nor fear, nor blinded eyes—
For some a warning note, for some no hint.
Yet stroke by stroke the moment nearer draws,
And without haste the busy clocks chime on,
And wait and wait to strike the Hour of Death
With scarce a different tone to mark the end.

THE COACH

WHEN distant church-bells chimed across the
fields,
We children felt a sense of holiday,
As stiff in Sabbath starch we watched the team
Prance from the stables, scorn the daily gear,
And trot to carriage-house, where stood in state
The shining Coach, unwrapped from linen case—
A peerless treasure making sermons seem
Fine as buff broadcloth seat on which we rode,
Things to endure for dear tradition's sake,
Adding much austere virtue to our pride.
Rolling through quiet billows of the hills,
Each well-loved tree and boulder by the road
That bore a personal beauty all the week
Seemed strange and in some unfamiliar scene.
The beat of horses' feet kept time with hymns.
We felt a part of some staid grown-up tale,
Until the coachman reined at stepping-stone,
And pomp and texts were through with for the
week.

THE TOOL-HOUSE

CAST not the eye of scorn on humble things,
Ye folk of lace and lavender, not born
To reckon wealth by old door-knobs, or know
The miser-love that gloats upon a screw.
Tarry not here, it is no place for you.
But ye with eyes to see, who understand
The greedy joy of finding a chance nut,
Who note a plank as weather-wise the sky
And guard a horse-shoe as some guard a book,
Come with me to the Tool-house by the hill,
Lovers of spicy cedars, tingling pines.
No need to search, the spirit runs before
To find the goodly shelter of old thoughts.
No cobwebbed corner but is part of me,
For here awoke life's laughter in the heart
And mirth whose end was heaviness and tears.
That grindstone whirled to sweet Sicilian airs
Of old Theocritus, or yet again
Ground out stern laws of life, those laws wise age
With gentle pity later strove to blunt.
The sun-gilt tools seemed golden daggers hung
In deep Arabian cavern; genii hid
Beneath the shavings there—I feel them yet,
And all expectant turn this way and that
As I were entered in a magic room
In half-forgotten, half-remembered tale.

Who'd sack a Tool-house and dismantle it
Would sack a city and betray a friend.
Who'd cast its cherished life-loved treasures out,
Mock it as rubbish, and despise its hoard,
Would trample hearts and jeer at love itself—
A pigmy soul too dwarfed for reverence,
Its cruel crudeness unabashed before
The slow accumulation of the years,
The things of life and love and common needs
That are no longer things, but have become
Part of the human family, taken on
A something of the sanctity of life.

TRADITIONS

TRADITIONS are that part of us we keep
To shield us from the present and protect
The pith and savour of our native mind;
Are in the blood and will betray themselves
Like hidden perfumes or a secret love;
Oft dwarf us and as oft give strength and poise
To save us in despair; are to the heart
Uplift and limitation. Character
Is wrought upon them as flesh clothes the spine.
Touch-stone and measuring rod are they to life.
Man blinded by them oft deceives himself,
Then finds in them a crutch to pick his way.
So are they hard to drop, and obstinate
Cling to men's nature dearer than all else.

THE SPRUCE

As the days of a tree are the days of my people.

Isaiah lxx., 22.

WITHOUT the homestead every nook reports
The history of my heart, from busy creek
And restless swirl of waterfall to sweep
Of green-patched farmlands steeply climbing up
The mountain we have writ our lives upon.
They share my life—the hazy valley dark
With hint of hills, the sculptured forest line,
The marching poplars pale as stricken dreams,
The flowering chestnuts, neighbors to the barns,
The giant lilacs, dragon haunt where I,
A child, fought mimic battles, played the rocks
Were dungeon-keep, where oft heart-sore I hid
When sick with shame—strange hurt to ponder
on.

There I went chasing golden butterflies,
And, loving wings, flew through the waves of
light
To travel with the sun a little child
Of dreams. There every word inflated built
Enchanted castles in the air that seemed
More real than realer things I know today.

These cedars, proud ancestral towers that point
Like fingers unto God, fit scaffold are

For life's background, that elemental need
Demanded by the soul. But most to me
Is this great wind-worn immemorial spruce,
An epic playing part with all my sires.
It is the tree of trees which somehow gives
Distinction and stability to life,
Which fallen the very place itself would die,
And faith uprooted wither and decay.
This tree is mine and doth possess me as
Possessions ever own their owner; so
I lie beneath its sheltering shade content
With this my axis of the whirling earth.

THE KNOLL

(At Harvest Time)

GOODLY it is to seek the woodland knoll,
To part the tangled shoots of sassafras
And push through bitter-sweet and juniper.
Wild fragrant grapes and golden honeycombs,
Nuts and ripe blackberries give lavish cheer.
Afar I see the reapers in the wheat,
The tired horses tread the cider-press.
Through boughs shine yellow haycocks on the
 hill,
Unwinnowed grain heaps high the threshing
 floor,
Below me apples weigh the trees to earth,
Pears lie upon the ground, plums scent the air,
White willows wave above me, elms and oaks,
And somewhere near hid locusts drone of frost,
Of winter-burials and frozen streams,
And overhead wide flocks of birds fly south.

THE ORCHARD

STRAIGHT rows of trees that scan from any point,
With breezy space for moving silences;
A thin bright stream that glitters through green
boughs

And whitens with the blossoms in the spring,
Where little naked feet may splash unseen.
Thickets of elder circle like an arm
Lest cornfields press, and hedge of hazel-nuts,
Full of sweet flutings, scarce knows if it be
Girdle of poppied wheat or orchard fringe.
See there the rutted ox-trail zigzags through,
Cutting the corner by smoke-house and trough,
Where like an eye the ancient elm stares 'round,
And munching cows reach over sagging gates
To nibble lustily the apples hung
A tantalizing tooth-length from a bite.

I love my Martha trees and like to go
And sit among them learning many things;
A serving sisterhood, too busy far
To scorn the idle Marys lost in dreams.
As old friends in new light new aspects wear
They ever changing, ever changeful seem.
See how they lean from cruel northern winds,
As hearts from unkind words, the gnarled bent
trees

Like gnarled old women knitting in the sun;
Or nodding branch to branch, as friend to friend,
They whisper secrets, chatting genially;
Or hand in hand as in an ancient dance,
Swinging to harpsichord of worlds unknown,
They croon of harvests, sickle-moons forgot,
Of all dead birds that somewhere still sing on,
Of all quenched fireflies, lost honey-bees.

The Orchard is man's ally; from of old
Has ever been his stanch and faithful serf.
In loneliest countries apple-boughs proclaim
A shack hid somewhere, and no home's complete
Without its mid-May orchard white with bloom.

Go plant an orchard if you want a friend.

THE PLOT OF SIMPLES, HERBS AND PLEASANT FRUITS

"All things out of a garden either of salads or fruits,
a poor man will eat better, that has one of his own, than
a rich man that has none."

PUSH wide the gate—three sagging steps lead
down

To old-world spices, treasured herbs bequeathed
To pleasure us, to solace and restore,
Oft grudged of honour, yet beloved withal
As uncouth, homely friend we call in need
And straight forget till ill hap next beset.
An aromatic spot where none marks grace
Of ragged-lady, sings rosemary's praise;
Yet like to goodly thoughts they gladden hearts
And right thing in right place delight the eye.

On all sides flourish peaches, generous plums,
Red raspberries and currants, luscious pears.
Bees drone about the hives, cool waters purl,
And all the air is sweet with opulence
Of summer scents and songs of fitting birds.
Here pot-herbs thrive and savory salletings,
Mustards and gingers hot as stinging words,
And bitter boneset likest gall of hate.

Search out the cherished simples half o'ergrown,
Charmed Juno's tears, the witches' herb o' grace.
Pluck thee an armful of the blue monkshood,
Tall gentian and the bright wild alum-buds.
Cull cowslip flowers and scarlet hops to spice
Thy sun-gold ales. A blessed thistle seek
Lest treasons come upon thee unaware.
Do scorpions gnaw thy brain? Wormwood has
fangs.
Art fiend-sick and accurst? Steep baleful hemp
And mandrake leaves in drowsy jasmine wine.
Drink till stars choke thee and the void floods
by.

A little earth, a little rain, lo, blooms
That wither veins, seeds breeding sleep,
Fabled narcotics sweet as thoughts of death,
And all here doled as hap or ill requires.

THE GARDEN

OLD gardens have a language of their own,
And mine sweet speech to linger in the heart.
A goodly place it is and primly spaced,
With straight box-bordered paths and squares of
bloom.

Bay-trees by rows of antique urns tell tales
Of one who loved the gardens Dante loved.
Magnolias edge the placid lily-pool
And flank the sagging seat, whence vista leads
To blaze of rhododendrons banked in green.
Azaleas by the scarlet quince flame up
Against the lustrous grape-vines trellised high
To pigeon-cote and old brick wall where hide
First snowdrops and the bravest violets.
A place of solitudes whose silences
Enfold the heart as an unquiet bird.

MAY

HERE spring by spring I seek my old-time
friends,
The wind-swept lilacs and the dew-drenched
ferns,
The bleeding-hearts, planted by some slim girl
An age ago and like to her young dreams.

I wonder did she plan the peony-path
Arched o'er by snowballs, dogwood boughs
 en fête;
If lilies-of-the-valley then as now
Mounted to that gold frieze of daffodils
Gleaming beneath the honeysuckle-wall?
Perchance these ranks of purple iris sprang
From some old cherished root of her hid pride,
For so pride flowers and valour lifts its head.
Each greets me from its own accustomed place,
Dear changeless friends who in a changing world
Give permanence and most sweet sense of home.

The eager pansies eye me as I stray
'Twixt blooms the poets and all lovers love,
Where half mysterious abides a sense
Of something happening. The soul expands;
Wistaria breaks into my repose—
A luscious sweet to reconcile the heart
To wintry ways. I half expect a note
Of elfin music from the hyacinths.
The festal bluebells put my mind in tune.
Primroses catch the heart as fancies should
And shift and sway the mood deliciously.
The clouds give me an airy quality.
I feel elate because the tulips bloom,
Wild-roses blow, and blithe narcissus watch
Their dainty shadows nodding in the sun.
It is a place of flowers, sweet to be,
With just a humming-bird for company.

JUNE

The Rose Garden

JUNE roses have a dialect their own—
Go tiptoe softly, bend thy heart to hear—
See roses, roses, roses everywhere
As Sappho would have loved to walk among.
From darkling ivy tender buds shine out
Like youth immortal in an old, old face.
Tall damask rose-trees circle spaciouly.
Rash tangled prairie roses clamber high
To meet the wild sweetbriar o'er the wall
Where smouldering cherries ripen in the sun.
Below run dewy borders of the yellow rose,
By fluting birds besieged with gifts of song—
A song for every wind-plucked petal dropped
In glittering amber from some golden age—
Sweet thefts whereon spring touch by touch has
traced
Her passions in the colours of the sun.

At farthest bounds an ancient dial there is
By pale moss-roses twined and garlanded.
'Tis here the Greater Gardener comes at night
To smile and ponder on man's handiwork
So craftily engrafted on His own.
(I used to think white roses loved Him best,
Their faces glowed so reminiscent, glad.)

A wilderness of roses! Jealously
They crowd about the moss-edged trickling
spring
That unforgetting sings the hours away
As in remembered days—a ceaseless song,
Giving the sadness of bright things that fade
A fleeting sense of everlastingness.
Enchanted shelter girt with quietness,
Nor ever stranger foot should enter in.
The vanished days hide here and shadows hold
Voices and laughter of the long ago,
Until I seem back safe in pinafores,
Picking the roses for the old rose-jar.

JULY

As shadows slant behind tall Gothic firs
And clustered gables sharpen in the West
'Tis good to stroll among sweet odours here,
The soft breeze buffeting the scents about—
Bewildering episodes to stir the soul.
Spiced lavender with rose-geranium drifts,
Filling the heart as it were empty vase.
Lemon-verbena, crossing heliotrope,
Eddies with mignonette fantastically.
Sweet peas reluctant to the clove-pinks yield,
Jasmine to cedar, strange mixed fragrances
Disturbing as elusive melody.

Fare down the straight stone walk, time edged,
betwixt

Tall spires of foxglove, cockscomb, larkspur-plumes—

A lover's lane—hard task it were to tell
When loveliest (When, Love, are kisses best?)
Methinks I hear refrains of other years
Repeated by gay canterbury bells.

"Go gather thou," the Garden-Spirit calls,
"Here from the love-in-mist, there where the
first

White petaled aster falls,—go gather thou
From bursting seed-cups of the gillyflower;
Pluck bud by bud to where the columbine
Runs with the periwinkle to the end"—
A straight stone walk to walk to heaven on!

The day grows darker, dim moths flutter by,
A faint far cow-bell tinkles o'er the hill,
And homing doves wheel gently through the
dusk.

The plain familiar ways grow strange, remote;
A face upon an urn smiles wickedly;
Footsteps evade, a robin hurtles by;
The Rose of Sharon winks an hundred eyes,
And four-o'clocks put out shy hands to me.
A moon-flower world lit by pale cosmos stars,
Mysterious, inviolate, serene,
Where tremulous and hushed the Garden waits
Sleep and the brooding presence of the night.
I stray as some lost wraith of memory,
The Garden but a Derelict of Dreams.

AUGUST

FROM corn-crib by the level pasture-lands
To knoll where spruce and boulders hide the
road

I know it like a book, and when my heart
Is waste and dry and hard and choked with
weeds,

I come here till it gently blooms again.
For gardens yield rich fruits that will outlast
The autumn and the winter of the soul,
Richest to him who toils with loving hands.
'Tis delving thus we learn life's secrets told
But to those favoured few who dig for them.
The Garden is an intimate and keeps
In touch with us, yet hath its own high moods,
And doth impose them on the mind of man
To shame his pettiness. So do I love
Its shimmering August mood keyed to the sun,
A harlequin of colour, birds and bloom.
Nasturtiums, zinnias, balsams, salvias blaze
By vivid dahlias; tiger-lilies burn
In scarlet shadow of Jerusalem-cross;
Beyond the queen-hydrangeas splendid rule
Barbaric marigolds; chrysanthemums
Outshine gladioli, and sunflowers flaunt
Their crests of gold beneath the giant gourds.
Within the arbor, script forgot, I muse,
While gorgeous hollyhocks sway to and fro
To mark the silences, and butterflies

Flit in and out like some bright memory,
And blinding poppies kindle slow watch-fires
Before the golden altar of the sun.

A spell lies on the Garden. Summer sits
With finger on her lips as if she heard
The steps of Autumn echo on the hill.
A hush lies on the Garden. Summer dreams
Of timid crocus thrust through drifted snow.

ENVOI

Go to the Garden, Friend! Down any path
Thou mayst come face to face with thine own
soul;
Round any turn thou mayst find God's foot-
steps
After the royal revels of the rain.
Go to the Garden—Eden waits for thee—
Yet mayhap thou wilt find Gethsemane.

The Aged Christ

Not the real Christ of my faith and yours, but a dream Christ this, cast upon the curtain of my mind by the human figure men talk about today.

The Aged Christ

SCENE I

Under the olive trees at sunset near highroad to temple. CHRIST; PETER; CHORUS.

CHORUS. As long ago with psalm and rite
We walked beside the Lord of Light,
So now His hurried day is o'er
Up to The City as before
We pilgrims journey year by year—
Ye heavenly powers, heed and hear.
To Christ in Heaven do we sing.
Blow trumps! Sweet harps and timbrels
bring!
With gifts and gleanings in our hands
Give praise to Him who understands.
Hail! Hail! Hail!

(CHRIST *and* PETER *withdrawing from throng.*)

PETER. Thou art weary, Lord, rest here and
watch.

CHRIST. Alas! They knew not I was in the
crowd.

They see, they recognize me now no more.

PETER. My heart is sore with Thy most grievous hurt,
And what to do I know not. Yet again
I beg Thee, Master, show Thyself in power.
Do miracles, stretch forth Thy hand and heal.

CHRIST (*aside*). Oft have I marveled at those miracles!

PETER. Bid cripples walk. Command the deaf to hear.
Be seen within the Temple as of old
Clothed in authority, dispensing alms.
Once more speak parables to catch men's hearts.
Claim Thou again Thy sovereignty with God.

CHRIST. Hush, Peter, nay—I can scarce bear to hear
Of those rash things. How dared I to believe
I, I alone, held God's torch to the world?
How bold my boyish faith to dream such dreams!
I one with God! (*Aside.*) Yet am I glad I dreamed.

PETER. Nay, Master, nay—I feel the miracles
In mine own life. It was no idle dream
For which I gave my highest soul to Thee.

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Thine own disciples testify the truth,
And even without Thee, carry on Thy work.

CHRIST. You mean?

PETER. I mean Thy Gospel to the world
Hath now gone out beyond control of Thee,
And like a seed, forgotten, yieldeth fruit
A thousand fold in other climes and lands.
'Tis Thine no more, but as a mighty sea
It rolls to distant shores, by unknown ways.

CHRIST. Strange, strange! And I? They care
for me no more.

(*Aside.*) - I tax myself that I do notice it.
Yet say you, that they magnify my name?

PETER. Even as one arisen from the dead.

CHRIST. And did that last wild cry upon the
cross

Not harm the cause? (*Aside.*) Before I dared
not ask.

PETER. Nay, Lord, they thought the human
heart of thee

But called in passing anguish unto God.

CHRIST. My quivering agony as nothing was
To that sharp sword of shame with which I
pierced

Mine own most bleeding breast. It was the
end.

Healed now my wounds, my body wholly
healed,
While that mad cry is as a broken blade
Rusting within the fibres of my soul.

PETER (*with tears*). Dear Saviour, it was long
ago—forget!

CHRIST. I knew not, Peter, I was but a man
Until that last blind hour upon the cross.
Even Gethsemane revealed it not.
Though driven to bay I wept, I sweated
blood,
I did not understand. Yet strangely since
Through all these after years, come fleeting
hints,
Obscure, disquieting, bewildering,
That manhood—yea, this common human-
ness—
Is greater than that young divinity.

PETER. Dear Christ, Thou art for ever Lord
to me.

CHRIST. Was it but youth's way to proclaim,
to share
The kindling truth which lit my flaming soul?

PETER. We saw the glory, Lord, when Thou
didst speak.

The Aged Christ 207

CHRIST. How strong I was in those exalted days!

My youth was as a lash to flay the law,
A bugle to bring down the walls which time
Had hardly builded in a thousand years.
Believing all, it all things wrought, and more.
And virtue I knew not went forth from me.
Peter, I do confess, I did not know
How overwhelming was the truth I preached.
Greater it was than I, its instrument.

PETER. I love Thee, Lord, but yet I cannot grasp

All Thou dost mean. Dear Lord, Thou
growest old.
Infirmity hath come upon Thee. See of late
How silver-white Thy hair, how slow Thy
step!

'Tis well that John doth guard Thee as a son
For I am come to take farewell of Thee.
Even as Thou didst bid by Galilee
I go to preach Thy Gospel to the world.

CHRIST. 'Twas long ago.

PETER. Vivid I see Thee yet,
So clear, I may no longer dwell with Thee
Here in this blest obscurity. I go
To Rome.

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CHRIST. To Rome!

PETER. Yea, even unto Death.

CHRIST. For me?

PETER. For Thee, yet even more for him,
 My brother, Thou of old didst bid me love
 More than myself.

CHRIST. I seem to know the words.
 They come to me from those fine, high,
 young days
 When I believed all things and all things
 wrought.
 (*Peter kneels.*) Kneel now to me no more,
 kneel thou to God.

PETER. Thy blessing, Lord, that I may die as
 Thou.

CHRIST. Nay, ask no blessing, save of an old
 man,
 Who humbly strives to equal thy dear faith.
 Oh Peter, give me back some little part
 Of my old faith in mine own lost Christhood.
 God I believe—help Thou mine unbelief!

PETER. Farewell, dear Christ, I go to feed Thy
 lambs.

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Farewell, dear Christ, I go to feed Thy
lambs.

Farewell, my Lord, I go to feed Thy sheep.

CHRIST (*unconsciously blesses Peter*).

Even unto Death, farewell, depart in peace.

SCENE II

*Jesus' home. Rough pillars about courtyard.
Trellis of grapevines to right. Water bottles and
spring boughs of blossoms to left.*

JOHN; BEGGAR.

BEGGAR. Where is the Christ who healeth?
Where is He?

JOHN. He is asleep.

BEGGAR. Of old ye spake not thus.
I am come far, an-hungered and in pain.
Through years have I come seeking, seeking
Him.
Does He turn me away? Then is no hope
In heaven or earth. Asleep while cripples
cry?
Asleep while those who ask, receive it not?
Asleep while those who seek Him, find Him
not?
Asleep while those who knock, are turned
away?
Then, Sir, He is no longer Him I sought.

JOHN. The Christ is old and spent, and mine
own power

Hath passed. So get thee gone, poor broken one.

Yet stay, an alms—here is a flower He loved.

BEGGAR. Could I but see His face, I should be whole,

For I recall how as a shrunken child

I saw Him feed the hungry multitude,

But no one took me near Him to be cured.

I slept beside the gate of Jericho

When Jesus passed. Though I have waited months

Beside that gate He never came again!

And when within the Synagogue He healed

The withered hand, we others came too late.

Now am I turned away! It cannot be!

Oh Sir, let me but look upon His face!

JOHN (*aside*). He begs, as all of us, a miracle.

Too late it is. Go thou, He heals no more.

BEGGAR. Let Him but say, "Forgiven," and I am whole.

JOHN. Why man, 'tis twenty years since He hath taught.

I dare not say how many since He healed.

But stay—He comes—the Christ.

BEGGAR (*with hand upon his beating heart*).

I know His step.

(*Enter Christ.*)

CHRIST. Who seeks me? In my sleep I felt the
cry
Of some poor needy one who called on me.

BEGGAR. Jesus, I come to Thee, bid me arise.

JOHN. Go man, no more.

CHRIST. Come near, I cannot see.
Give me thy hand. What, man, dost thou
believe?

BEGGAR. Even as once of old Thou hast the
power
To make me whole. (*Suddenly he leaps up
cured.*) Hail Christ! I walk, I walk!

JOHN (*aside*). A miracle! I would that Peter
saw!
How pale Thou art, oh Christ!

CHRIST. I had forgot
What strength it took (*drooping*). And yet
I do not know
Whether 'twas his belief, or mine own power.
I do distrust myself—half frightened am
To feel divinity stir once again
Within my feeble frame. Is it come back?

JOHN. Tax not Thyself, dear Lord. (*Aside.*)
How weak He is!

We love Thee, Master, let Thy Christhood go
Even as one who puts his mantle by.

Rest Thou as doth the labourer after toil.

I love Thee, Master, lean on me and rest.

(*Both walk slowly into house.*)

BEGGAR (*singing*).

My distresses touched the skies,

Heard my cries.

Suppliant and weak I kneeled,

Thou hast healed.

Now I praise with flying feet,

Glad and fleet.

As a god, I swiftly race

By Thy grace.

As in dreams I skip along,

Straight and strong.

Sure of foot as mountain sheep,

Fearless leap.

Dance and run in holy glee,

Praising Thee.

(*CHILDREN run from all directions, attracted as always by joy, skipping sympathetically with the BEGGAR.*)

CHILDREN. Hail! Hail!

BEGGAR. Hail! Hail! Hail!

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE III

The same. Twilight skies. A few sharp stars shining through portal.

CHRIST; JOHN.

JOHN (*with scroll*). Where were we Lord?

CHRIST. "I saw a great white throne,
And Him that sat thereon." Read it again.

JOHN (*reads*). "I saw the holy city coming
down."

CHRIST. How have I prayed for this!

JOHN (*reads*). "The Lamb is light
Thereof, and savèd nations walk therein.
His name upon their foreheads shall be writ,
And they shall see His face."

CHRIST. Shall see His face!
I would I too at Patmos dreamed such dreams.
'Tis as I turned the page of mine own heart.
Hark!

JOHN. I hear nought.

CHRIST. Read on.

JOHN. "And God shall wipe
Away all tears. There shall be no more
Death."

CHRIST. Hark!

JOHN. Oft these seven days Thou listenest
thus.

CHRIST. Ill news precedes itself, and griefs
forecast
Shadows upon the mantle of my mind.
(*Suddenly shrinking.*) At last!

(*Enter MESSENGER, panting.*)

MESSENGER. For Christ—a missive come
from Rome.

JOHN (*reads*). A missive come from Rome—
from Barnabas!
Peter, my Lord, Peter—

CHRIST. Peter is dead!

JOHN. Crucified.

CHRIST. Crucified even as I.

JOHN. Nay, Lord,
With head reversed, as one unfit to die
As died his Lord.